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Theatre -Australia

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL THEATRE MAGAZINE Sept - Oct, 1985

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CONTENTS

THEATRE GUIDE	2
QUOTES AND QUERIES	4
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR	16
REVIEWS	7
John Dryden's <i>Hedley at Exeter, Some Time After Her</i>	7
Jack Muldoon: <i>The Puppets</i>	9
Carrie Hutchinson: <i>Kaschib</i>	10
Walter de Fotheringham: <i>The Department</i>	12
Colleen O'Brien: <i>Love of the Knowledge, Different Kingdom, Trial</i>	14
J. S. Ryan: <i>Family Passions</i>	16
Ron Blair: <i>Shakespeare's Workshop</i>	17
Katherine Brisbane: <i>Men of La Morte</i>	18
Rae Crangham: <i>The Changing Room</i>	20
Robert Page: <i>Scandinavia</i>	21
Roger Peters: <i>Reluctant</i>	22
Guthrie Wozny: <i>Major Barbara</i>	24
PLAYSCRIPT	27
Jennifer Rankin: <i>How Art</i> (1)	27
DIRECTOR'S COLUMN	32
Richard Harcourt: <i>The Education of Margarete Arendt</i>	32
PLAYRIGHT	36
Martin Smith: <i>The Politician of Storm J. Spratt</i>	36
AUSTRALIAN CURRENTS	38
Tom Marks: <i>Suburb: A Case to Answer</i>	38
Bill Redmond: <i>Two Men with the Fox</i>	40
THEATRE ORGANISATIONS	42
Shirley Walsh: <i>Mitochondria's Triumph or The Miller and His Men</i>	42
FILM, TELEVISION AND RADIO	44
Phil Hayes: <i>Pure Shot and the New Professional</i>	44
THEATRE IN EDUCATION	46
Roger Sherman: <i>Philosophy: Ready for Challenge</i>	46
ANNOUNCEMENTS	48
Jane Schiller: <i>Portrait of Australian Student Theatre 1976</i>	48
INTERNATIONAL	50
Walter de Fotheringham: <i>A Piece of Overdrive</i>	50
IT'S NEWS	51
TECHNICAL	52
David Irving: <i>The Character of Australian Technology</i>	52
OPERA	54
David Ogden: <i>John Goppy, Australian Professor</i>	54
BOOKS	56
Helen van der Poorten: <i>Production Handbook, Courtesy Doubleday</i>	56
CLASSIFIED	58
INDEX TO ADVERTISERS	58

PROMOTIONS	Sydney	San Meager	001 456 90
ADVERTISING	Melbourne	Tom Lander	001 232 88
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EDITORIAL

Apart from one speaker's remark that 'theatre is dead' (and by no means untrue), the recent Australasian Theatre Studies Conference in Sydney was most interesting for an attendance speech by Mr Paul Lundy MLC outlining the possibilities of the new NSW Labor Government's policy on the arts. There was a substantial specific sum for a film project (as much as anything, apparently, to avoid it falling into the clutches of a rival South Australian corporation) and an equivocal promise that the country's only regional theatre company (the Hunter Valley Theatre Company) would not be allowed to die in its infancy for lack of subsidy — but beyond that there was a wealth of warning for theatre who have come to regard state support as their inherent right. The politicians tell them of saying: if you can't stop your way through your capacity to attract audiences, then don't look to us to pick up the tab, but let us do it. The government was only partially economic, ideological and political reasons were a stated aim. A note from this amount to a relatively interest caught that, it was suggested, to expect support as if it were satisfying a majority need. There isn't any subsidy.

In general, it seems the heady days of the 1970s when theatre's support for the theatre arts was not. The NSW Government's reaction as outlined by Mr Lundy is very similar to that of Ron McKean in an article published in this issue: *Suburb: A Case to Answer*. This is a subject which artists feared and theatre politicians, personally, of course, yet the theatre profession itself. We have invited representatives of the Australia Council and the profession to respond to Tom Marks' argument in next month's issue. We also invite readers to write to Theatre Australia expressing their views.

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NEW SOUTH WALES:

HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY, Newcastle (28 2528)

A Happy and Holy Occasion by John O'Donoghue
Directed by Terence Clarke (Premiere 10th Sept)

INDEPENDENT (928 7377)

Hail and Goodbye by Athol Fugard
Directed by Peter Williams (to Sept 24th)
Tender Rhapsody by Richmond Young (every Sat afternoon)

MARIAN STREET (498 3188)

In Presence of Love by Terence Rattigan
Directed by Alister Duncan (to Oct 2nd)

Gidding On by Alan Bennett
Directed by Alister Duncan (Oct 7th - Nov 8th)

MUSIC HALL THEATRE RESTAURANT (909 8222)

The Feast of Belshazzre's Feast by Stanley Walsh
Directed by Stanley Walsh (continuing)

NEW THEATRE (819 3403)

The Changing Room by David Storey
Directed by John Tucker (to Oct 8th)

NIMROD (68 5003)

Uptown: The Recruiting Officer by George Farquhar
Directed by Ken Harter (to Sept 28th or Oct 2nd)

The Disasters of War by John Webster
Directed and Designed by Rex Christopherson (Oct 2nd or 8th - Nov 8th)

Downstairs: The Reputation of Benjamin Franklin by Steve J. Spence
Directed by Richard Wherrett (from Aug 28th)

OLD TOTE (663 6122)

Dream Theatre: The Delta House by Henrik Ibsen

Directed by Alexander Hey (Sept 19th - Oct 28th)

Parade Theatre: Catherine Engaged by Simon Gray (to Sep 21st)

A Touch of Mistle by Jack Wildman
Directed by Mick Rodger (Sep 29th - Nov 16th)

Seymour Centre: Agass by Peter Sheffer
Directed by Ted Craig (Sep 22nd - Oct 19th)

PLAYERS THEATRE COMPANY (922 8308)

The Lion in Winter by James Goldman
Directed by Graham Cery

Q THEATRE (92 5011)

Family Love by Michael Cove
Directed by Raven Jackson (Sep 13th - Oct 2nd)

Who's Wife in Step Lane?
Directed by Alan Salzer (On tour in the Western Suburbs)

REGENT THEATRE

Moscow Variety Spectacular (Oct 1st & 8th)

THEATRE ROYAL

Same Time Next Year by Marvin Haden
Directed by Gordon Hunt (Sep 15th - Oct 30th)

ACTORS COMPANY (680 2503)

Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett
Directed by Rodney Delaney (from Sept. 22nd)

BONDI PAVILION (30 7341)

Salvatore: Marcello Mino D'Agui (24th 38th Sep)

Manon at the Pavillion
Directed by Peggy Clark (Oct 1st-4th)

CAPITOL THEATRE (212 4199)

Jesus Christ Superstar Roe/Wiesler
Directed by Stefan Haag
Choreographed by Christine Kuhn (continuing)

CIVIC, Newcastle (2 1977)

Moscow Variety Spectacular (Oct 3rd & 4th)

Men of La Mancha
Directed by Betty Pounder (Oct 8th-18th)

ENSEMBLE (928 8077)

Alphabetic Order by Michael Freyn
Directed by Don Real (Sep 2nd onwards)

HER MAJESTY'S (212 1066)

Men of La Mancha
Directed by Betty Pounder (until Oct 2nd)

Guide

QUEENSLAND

LA BOITE (36 2296)

Pepper - *Emmeline Wendie Jane* by Rolf Wernigut
Directed by Bronwen Boherty (Sep 3rd - Oct 2nd)

Lysistrata by Aristophanes
Directed by Ross Finney (Oct 8th - Nov 2nd)

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY (21 3661)

A Joke to Make by Jack Hibbard
Directed by Alan Bheerle (Sep 16th - Oct 2nd)

The Big Men Fly by Alan Hope
On Tour throughout Queensland in
cooperation with the Queensland Arts Council
(Sept. 26th - Nov 30th)

TWELFTH NIGHT THEATRE (52 5889)

Canadian Mime Theatre (Sep 20th - 26th)

Queensland Ballet Company (Sep 26th - Oct 19th)

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

HER MAJESTY'S

Black Theatre of Prague (Sep 14th - 26th)

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN THEATRE COMPANY (81 8161)

The Last of the Bushmen by John Povey
Directed by David Williamson
Designed by Anna French (Sep 16th - Oct 6th)

An Evening with Robert Burns
Frank Galanter (Sep 22nd)

And Also Remember Dreams & Lullaby by Paul Zindel
Directed by George Ogilvie
Designed by Frank Parry (Oct 14th - Nov 6th)

TASMANIA

CITY HALL

Mancow Macey Spectacular (Oct 12th)

VICTORIA

ALEXANDER THEATRE COMPANY

What the Butler Saw by Joe Orton
Directed by Malcolm Robertson

COMEDY

Black Theatre of Prague (to Sep 25th)

Private Lives by Noel Coward
Directed by Robert Chasen (Oct 12th - Nov 12th)

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (645 1100)

Russell Swan: A Handful of Friends by David Williamson
Directed by Rodney Fisher
Designed by Shaun Garton (to Oct 30th)

In Motion: The Arts by Edwards Meritt
Directed by Ian Giles
Designed by Ring Topp (Nov 14th - Nov 6th)

Grand Street: The City's Main Street by Robert Cragg
Directed by Andrew Ross

PLAYBOX (634 688)

Godspell
Directed and choreographed by Betty Foulmer

PRAW FACTORY (347 7133)

Koussik by David Hare
Directed by Alan Robinson (to Sep 16th)

The Overcoat by Jack Hibbard
Directed by Tim Robinson (from Sep 30th)

REGENT PALACE

The Rocky Horror Show (continuing)

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

HOLE IN THE WALL (81 2403)

The Ash Against the Leaves by Peter Handke
Directed by Sally Holmes (Sept 15th - 18th)

Days in the Trees by Marguerite Duras
Directed by John Milson
Designed by David Young (Sep 22nd - Oct 23rd)

PLAYHOUSE (26 3344)

Handful of Friends by David Williamson
Directed by Anna Neume (Sep 16th - Oct 2nd)
Black Theatre of Prague (Oct 5th - 19th)

THEATRE IN DIFFICULTIES

J. C. Williamson's

We are optimistic for the Australian drama we haven't done. But J.C.W.'s have had playwrighting competitions — the last one was last year — and they yield barely one in thousands that is good enough, and even that one needs years of more working on it. I don't see why J.C.W. should have to finance that sort of thing.

John Bryson, J.C.W. Williamson's Pty. Ltd.

The Hunter Valley Theatre Company

There will always be some compromises and local amateur companies to present plays. But for the first time in the Newcastle region there has been regular drama work in schools, tertiary institutions, prisons, and we have taken plays to all these and to factories and other workplaces. We have prioritised funds on theatre in town, conducted acting classes, provided tertiary services for playwrights and local groups, and so on. I have no doubt at all that this community program, under the direction of Michael Raffe, has been our most important work. Most important, least heralded, and a constant drain on resources. It was made possible by a grant of \$3000 from the Australia Council for which we are grateful, but it looks as though we will have to curtail the program severely.

Terence Clarke, Artistic Director, Hunter Valley Theatre Company

— the Hunter Valley Theatre Company is a prototype experiment which many state and municipal bodies are watching with interest. It is the first regional theatre company to be formed, if it succeeds and how it succeeds will be taken as an example to other local centres. If it fails it will be another setback to government responsibility for the community arts.

Katharine Sheehy

"A company that talented that astonishing must succeed. For just Newcastle but Australia needs the Hunter Valley Theatre Company."

John Brown, Readman Writer, A.P.G.

The Stables

It is indeed unfortunate that 'The Stables' should have come to such an early downfall. Had the Australia Council been able to find about \$50,000 capital grant for the purchase of the building and an additional \$10,000 per annum to fund its operations, Stables would have gladly continued to administer The Stables as it did in 1975. That is, any group who wished to use the building would have been able to do so without incurring any newspaper advertising costs, telephone bills, rent, electricity or maintenance charges. Bob Ellis and Anne Brookesbank in purchasing the building tried to make sure it was not lost to Sydney theatre, instead they have only jeopardised its life.

John Newby, Manager, Nimrod Theatre

QUOTES AND

The Prom

"The Prom is some financial difficulty. Audiences haven't quite come up to expectations — that is contained result of the economic situation and our programming. The programming hasn't been wrong — we've done a year or more experimental stuff than in the past (Knuckle would never have been done a year ago) and we've expanded our community programs and a lot of the expense that is has been developmental. Next year that is probably our off.

John Tinsley, executive Administrator of the Australia Performing Group

La Marna

"The La Marna programme is usually left up to Betty Burdett. She plans in half year periods. Though she's not as much interested in La Marna as she used to be. It used to have more things and a greater variety of things going on than now. I don't know about La Marna's life. As I'm fairly certain Betty won't want to. Thus And I'm not really interested in carrying on like it, but I'm not prepared to put all the necessary energy into it. I think I've had enough of that. La Marna's audience have tapered off this year — it needs a new boost of life. It would be good to have more people sending new scripts.

Anne Eberley, Manager La Marna Theatre, Carlton.



"We must think rationally about our theatre and enter rationally — I think it is a magazine can bring us together and also represent our theatre abroad," said Ruth Cassell at the official launching of Theatre Australia at the Nimrod Theatre. "There have been other theatre magazines in the past but I have a growing suspicion that this one is going to be a winner. Those who make up what the Nimrod Review described as 'the tedious chronicling, checklist, directory, shopaholic of Sydney's arts scene' (and Sydney is not unusual) through the carnival have to open



LETTERS TO

Dear Sir,
Congratulations on your first first issue, we wish you every success.
Yours faithfully,
William Arner
Arner's Theatrical Tones, South Granville, N.S.W.

Dear Sir,
I congratulate you on the breadth of coverage of your magazine. It is heartening to see theatre for children and young people given prominence in its first issue.

Your correspondent M. Cassell is probably too young to remember the first T.T.E. teams formed in Australia. They are not as recent as she would have us believe. In fact the Australian Theatre for Young People, then in no way attached to any other body (it worked with the Q.T.E. it is more or less old) added four T.T.E. teams annually as long as twelve years ago. The first was in March in February 1965 with Dana Penman, John Armstrong and Gordon Southey. It fairly and by 1972 the companies were covering N.S.W., A.C.T., Queensland and occasionally South Australia. T.T.E. was supported in 1972 and concentrated on workshops and major productions but re-launched in 1976.

Dana Skelton

Executive Director A.T.Y.P.
Programme Manager of the Q.T.E. Tote

Dear Sir
Having been privileged to attend the launching of your Journal at the New Nimrod Theatre, I am happy to join the number of those wishing you every success for the future.

As Vice President of the Victorian section of the Australian Association of Theatre Technicians, I am very pleased to see that technical aspects are rightly an important part of your Journal's policy and hope that the Association in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales will collaborate with you to mutual benefit.

As General Manager of Strand Electrix in Australia, I must confess total absence of prior knowledge of the information is stage lighting in Raymond Cassell's article on the Opera House Theatre, but in the other hand feel that some response is necessary to Gerry Wilkinson's references to imaginative multiplex control systems and the plea for alternative theatre technology, page 48.

We fully agree that experimental school or other theatres must have available to them conservative and flexible equipment — we must however consider the implication that our scoring of standard control systems is high. Your authors state that a 48-channel multiplex system should be available for about \$1000 (i.e. less than \$40 per channel) (see

THE EDITOR

Mark Volkmann, Assistant
General Electric and Compressor Division

Hagen *Carroll* **Artistic Director, Ensemble Theatre**

What is Alex Hay doing with a suitcase full of imported "decorations" — could they be for his part of *Moderato in The March* to be staged at the end of the book in the West End?



Mary will be interviewing Ring Leaders for the next year.



1. **Introduction**

ORIGINAL THEATRICAL
ENTERPRISES

J.C. WILLIAMSON THEATRES
& PARACHUTE PRODUCTIONS

HALFWAY AT EASTER

John Smythe

SAME TIME NEXT YEAR

HALFWAY AT EASTER by Alan Coom. New Community Theatre (opened 18 at 36) Greater West Palace, Designer: Martin Tom. Director: MICHAEL JOHN. **SAME TIME NEXT YEAR** (1976) by Bernard Slade. The J.C. Williamson Theatre, Designer: MICHAEL JOHN. Director: MICHAEL JOHN.

SAME TIME NEXT YEAR by Bernard Slade at the Comedy Theatre, Melbourne. (Audience preview 25 at 78). Director: MICHAEL JOHN. Designer: MICHAEL JOHN. Director: MICHAEL JOHN.

Georges or not, I am going to make comparisons between a much acclaimed Broadway hit and a barely noticed Australian try out of a new Australian play.

Same Time Next Year is Bernard Slade's fourth play and the first to make Broadway having played initially in Washington and Chicago. It is a clever slick and witty two-hander which thankfully draws on a few more components of human experience than most of the lightweight British fare staged up by J.C. Williamson's in recent years. Yet despite its expert crafting and neat, efficient packaging, or perhaps because of it, it emerges as yet another misapprehension and comfortably understanding comedy.

One is tempted to blame the script. Lewis Harter extracts a great deal from it, showing insight and compassion for his character. George (who are there always called George) and performing with facility technique and style. But he is limited by the starchy too pitiful. Nancy Hayes, on the other hand, rarely extends her Gorn beyond the given dialogue and by consequence does this so placidly aware. Her performance is relatively superficial and stager.

The play spans some 25 years (1951-76) at annual adulterous liaisons. There are six scenes spaced five or so years apart and it takes place in the same guest cottage of a country inn in Northern California.

Georg is from an Irish Catholic background, left school at an early age, got pregnant and married at eighteen but is pragmatic, successful and happy. Her husband thinks she goes into retreat each year. George is an opportunist, a latter day social climber and financially dependent on wife and lover for his sense of self-esteem and identity. He uses that standard business trip to

As the years roll by, George becomes more conservative while Doris catches up on her education and breaks out into new spheres. When he shakes the whole "business trip" plays parts in a bar room and gets into trouble. She becomes a highly successful business woman, then gives it up to look after an "unsuccessful" part time stock husband who gets every day so often it's in the very great need of money. George turns to teaching, economics. Urban/suburban tensions are explored but the status quo remains unbreached. That was able to be exposed I suppose. The appalling 1968 segment was not. Suddenly Doris is a flower clutching, cheerfully clothed pseudo hippie saying "do do you want a fuck?" etc. Why? Because she is now a full time student. They reconciled she launches into an anti-Vietnam war debate then discovers that George voted for Goldwater because he advocated ending the war by bombing the little bastards off the face of earth. The ensuing conflict ends with him revealing that his son was killed in Vietnam to a gasp, whilst trying to get a wounded soldier onto a Red Cross helicopter.

I, for one, find it very offensive to be subjected to such distorted and cynical attempts to manipulate audience emotions.

Director Gordon Hunt must share this blame for the vague consensus. Had Doris played the game longer in check at first then proved generally unimpressed at first and then swept at least basic character consistency and credibility could have been maintained.

So to the local play. Alan Coom's *Halfway At Easter*. This, a most laudable intention, was only at first try-out stage. The theatrical company especially formed at great financial loss, by the editor, was severely hampered by limited time resources and budget. Much was



Lewis Harter (George) and Nancy Hayes (Doris) in *Same Time Next Year*. Photograph: Richard Wallis



Anne Pardollbury (Julia) and Benny Michael (Gordon) Photograph: David Parker

debilities compromised in order to get them. As Crum remarks in the light of his experience, some cuts will be reinstated. Different solutions to unsolved problems will be found, valuable discoveries will be built upon and new possibilities will be explored. 'Forever as it stood by the final performance (I) at least found it far less absorbing than the reported show.

Two couples, once members of the same social group, now living in different states (most by arrangement) in a motel halfway between Sydney and Melbourne for Easter. Gordon and Julia are the first of the gang to get married. Clare and Ted were the last and shouldn't have. None (both couples have families and problems.

In the course of the Battle of Waterloo various games are played, vulnerable underdogs are exposed and people get hurt. Non-communication, abusive vulnerability and near anguish battle against desperate attempts to maintain lucidity. Conclusions and possible solutions are left for the audience to anticipate with.

The play's great strength is in the focal character, Clare (Lesley Baker). Her joyful sophistication and razor wit hides a disheartening and manipulative compulsion which in turn is her defence against very real but expressed anxieties and resources. She is her own worst enemy. Crum and Baker successfully appeared for compassion without compromising truth, losing credibility or manipulating our emotions. She fails to change for the better by the end but we are forced to reassess our initial impressions of her.

There were bugs aplenty in Bruce Pollock's

production. The extraordinary notion that Julia and Clare thought lesbians were synonymous with leather gear, bondage and discipline books resulted as I understand it from unpalatable cutting. People entered rooms expecting them to be empty yet showed no surprise at finding others there. Clare returned after closing her eyes out, yet her eyes make up remained undiminished. Compulsively attending to that would have said much more about her vanity and defensiveness than the aid lighting up a cigarette smantly.

Anne Pardollbury's Julia was nearly perceptive. Benny Michael's Gordon was close as far as it went but lacked substance. John Garrett was competent but maccart as Ted.

The full company must be credited, however, with overcoming many of the problems presented by the limited script within the abridely short time available to them. The text was still repetitive and awkward in places but no undoubted potential was wasted for all to see.

The question is, where can the play go from here? With J.C. Williamson's finally going to the wall, it seems appropriate to reiterate my long held claim that commercial theatre can only find secure roots in its own home grown products. If only someone had the foresight to invest in local talent, taking proper account of the arduous process involved in developing first rate entertainment. It really is time they stopped writing back, reading for that mythical 'great play' for specific materialise. We have worked long and hard at establishing viable film and television industries and proved there is a market for and the talent to produce popular local shows. So when will the long-suffering commercial theatre management wake up and catch up?



John Garrett (Ted), Lesley Baker (Clare), Benny Michael (Gordon) and Anne Pardollbury (Julia) in *Halfway* at Easter. Photograph: David Parker

MELBOURNE THEATRE
COMPANY

THE FOURSOME

Jack Hibbard

Kerry Dwyer (Harry) and Lulu Clark (Bella) in *The Foursome* Photograph: David Parker

AND FORTUNATELY for E.A. Whithead's *The Foursome*, Director Bruce Whithread (Designs: Steve Bell) has chosen to direct *THE FOURSOME* with JOHN WOODS, THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN

Like many other critics, I found Melbourne Theatre Company's choice of E.A. Whithead's *The Foursome* as their seasonal presentation in an alternative season at the Grant St. Theatre a curious one. It might be well felt that the play, with its sexual experiments and moments of sheer nudity, not to mention the near-total simplicity of its characters, offered some kind of antidote to the company's more cluttered and mainstream fare. It could even be speculated that the management thought the play somewhat ideal as seasonal sex value.

Whatever the rationale for the production, *Foursome* turned out to be a rather tame event, and fairly extended the night. I saw it the first trouble two in the play, which opens in the crude and two-dimensional world of a kitchen of poor, cold and hungry, smacking of a sociological and quasi-realistic (but) in male dependency and female misery in the lower orders.

Two retarded specimens of the English working class, Harry and Tim, arrive on a bench with two girls, Bella and Maria, who they had picked up the night before. The four of them spend a morning and afternoon together in a series of platonic encounters, repulsive abuse, and utter sexual games.

The males are a particularly pathetic duo, dragging along, and stupid whose most inspired moments are those in which they catalogue their intense detestation of the female body, its odours and accoutrements. Indicative of the play's shallowness is that it doesn't even upon and develop the potential rivalry between their platonic and the men's unspoken desire to plug every hole within sight. As a deeper level of plot, it is not an irony — men who hate and fear women, who are emotionally incapable of love, often treat

them aggressively like minor pests, who loathingly match up their victims on a seaboard. Whithead only hints schematically, not dramatically, at some of this.

A lot of the wrong for the males comes particularly close to a nihilistic and nihilistic exaggeration of some much more sophisticated and subtlest feminist beliefs. Whithead has little concern for the total imbric of social complexities of these characters: they are four-square quadrupeds with all their moieties in their design. A Soviet vision perhaps, but not in this play, so devoid of social nuance and social control.

If the men are foolish and irredeemable, the women are utter gulls — naive, vain and plebeian given to repeated gibberish like rock off and dirty sugar, instead of a more natural range of colloquial language. Being is a rich repository of metaphor and conceit. Whithead says it like his characters was one night in a home for juvenile delinquents or a weekend at Manicombe.

Periodically, his view of women as *Foursome* could readily be seen as misogynist. Unless he is a complete reactionary, the play could however be adequately interpreted as a deliberately distorted and skew examination about women: that they are conditioned by men into idiot and monstrous behavior. Yet Whithead presents his women as virtually biologically untrained, quite beyond the possible dimensions of social and individual awareness. If they keep any minds at all, they are resident in their legs and feet.

On the night these women were comically enmeshed to a certain extent by the performances of Lulu Clark and Kerry Dwyer who kill out their impersonations with more dimension, flexibility and verisimilitude than the male cast. This in itself is some kind of tribute to one theme of the play.

John Wood and Greg Zukerman seemed at ease before the unresolvable tasks imposed by their roles — often tending to manifest a strain of expressive physicality, intention instead of verbal speech, or mutation instead of character.

They were in no way assisted by Simon Huggins's production which chose to identify the play as some kind way says of Australians, thereby working against whatever local speech rhythms and idiosyncrasies of human the text based

Whithread has been deliberately coy about details of possible social location, perhaps in the hope that this lends the work some typology. It is quite obvious, nevertheless, that the characters are proletarian and English. These two facts at once in the Grant St. production, as if sewing something through a distorting lens. The tape recorded clanging of chaffers by a beach does little to lessen the disorientation.

The condition of women at, I suppose, relatively worse among the working classes. But surely this is largely due to social and economic factors, not solely the result of male repression or some quirk of the sexual gland. Their questions and perspectives are left untouched by Whithead, and unattended interpretively by the production.

The best parts of the evening for me were when a male and female were left alone when games and face were partly abandoned, when some exploration and communication took over. These episodes contrasted sharply with the rest of the play and properly suggested that the social agglomeration of men and women into distorted groups is a major social mistake, that gender peer groups cause a lot of the rest.

Once again this is dirty and theologically implied is not a substantial and organic consideration within the drama. Perhaps in the end my argument might be even stronger, as laid in they are in the whole world of the play, they are not simply as bad as this.

In the late 60s there were some Australian plays that dealt with similar themes to *Foursome* and dealt with them much more thoroughly and aptly were much more aware of social amplitude and individual complexity — e.g. John Ronald Brontë (*Know Who to Feel Sorry For*). Many of these plays were relatively unrelated to the allegedly local phenomenon of matehood and loneliness, their response however to this was at once more comprehensively critical and understanding than the bulk of *Foursome*.

Ultimately then the MTC production seemed both deep and unimportant, tracing human ground in the belief that the play's original was irretrievably English. As an alternative, *The Foursome* was rather like a light paper after steak-and-eggs on a winter's night.

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP

KNUCKLE

Garrie Hutchison

Knuckle by David Hare. From Fantasy (opened 8 w 78) 10 weeks. Alan Robinson. Director: Chris Coleman. Cast: MARK DILLON, Jenny FEN, Anthony GILL, Mike DUNNING, GUYLYN SHAW. Book: HILARY BROWN. Mus: JOHN KNOXLEY. For more prices visit JACK KNOX.

"The routines in murder movies of a world in which gangsters can rule nations, where no man can walk down a dark street in safety because law and order are so large waste about but refuse to be pressing."

Raymond Chandler, *The Simple Art of Murder*

Chandler believed that contemporary history was not a matter of politics or religion. He saw it as "the marriage of a nobleman to a gangster and how their home life and children turned out."

Sarah Lambert, *The Dangerous Edge*

"Down these mean streets a man named Gatsby is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid."

Raymond Chandler, *The Simple Art of Murder*

"I first heard Penelope called Penelope by an armed man named Mickey Denny in the Big Ship in Dune. He also called his shirt a shirt. I didn't think anything of what he had done to the city's name."

Donald Hoffmann, *Red Hare* at

CURLY: What do you see?

JENNY: I see suffering and pain and men not happy with their lot —

CURLY: Do you?

JENNY: I do. I see misery and pain and men not in anger and I see tears of sorrow and of resignation. I see men with axes in their hands, acid streaming off their skins, needles in their muscles, tripping on barbed wire, falling on broken bottles. That's what I see.

CURLY: Ah! That's better. Quite unchanged David Hare, *Knuckle*

Such is the world of David Hare's play *Knuckle*. The corrupt and amoral world of the crime novel, gangsters, cops, shamers, strength, lust, theft and murder. This is a world

where even men of honour such as Philip Marlowe, Sam Spide and Law Archer do not seek the truth — merely a form of justice. The truth is something that shifts and moves like a mirage, the closer you think you get to it. So they live alone, most people only in their weaker moments, and try and keep the guard as when walking into the mists of the night and powerful. It is no accident that for the most part the best crime fiction has been placed on the West Coast of the United States, the place of the future. But California only stands as a convenient shorthand for any other place in this world, just as the Italian Coast Court stands for the Italian diaspora in California. In Guilford, or Adelaide, everyone knows that life is really lived on the edge, passions and temptations run the gamut. This is the place of three piled fists, and its corridors lead men to the extremes of his own being where he finds and loses himself in murder, madness, dream, violent sexuality, terror, death, torture and mutters off a coward. This description of the Passenger's place by John Kerman might serve as a description of the world of the crime novel, from William Collins and Edgar Allan Poe onwards. It is the world made into a system that David Hare uses magnificently and rationally in *Knuckle*.

PATRICK: For me when I was young there was something called life. You see about a New South Wales island of which I called life. It turned out to be a particular system — called capitalism. And I always thought it was life.

Capitalism. That is the critical aspect of Hare's evocation of the spirit of *Knuckle*, that is, a particular system sub-designed to keep people efficient. This is a similar point of view to the best writers of crime fiction. Whether or not they derive any political point of view from a William Collins or Edgar Allan Poe, the world is a place where even the most determined men have a tough time being intrinsically honest with himself. Or mostly cry about the plight of anyone else.

Curly is an arms dealer. He comes home from Peru because his sister Sarah, a child, he investigates. He now wants to return the truth about Sarah. Curly interrogates Jenny, Sarah's friend and marriage ex-officio. Shadow of the Moon, "the only club in Guilford." Curly establishes some facts: no body, return from violence, a purse. Murder or suicide, that is the question. Curly goes to see his father, Patrick. A merchant. Patrick shows him a plausible story that he sticks to. A personality like a puzzle. Curly and Patrick do not get on. Patrick prudently tells Curly a little of the sister he hasn't seen for 12 years, and has a story about her death. Curly is not satisfied. Mrs Dunning, a housekeeper, has moved in to place of Patrick's death.

He meets other people. Max, a journalist, boyfriend of Sarah. Max states: He tries to see Malloy, the owner of the club. Malloy turns out Malloy did not write the day after Curly came to Guilford. Curly is increasingly attracted to Jenny and her legs. He enters the possession of Jenny's legs, living in Guilford. Hare's story is to do with property speculation. Malloy's mother being attracted off into a mental hospital, her house bought by a company maybe Patrick, maybe Malloy. Sarah having about this telling Max. Max blackening the path of the woman's dead dogs, a loss. Sarah not having about it, but Max threatening Patrick with telling her various stories.

A letter arrives from Sarah. Everyone drinking much the same. Curly goes back to his gun. Patrick makes money. Jenny, alone.



Mike Dallas (Curly) and John Burrell (Max) in *Knuckle*. Photograph: A P O



Max Gillies (Curly) and Ray Robertson (Frank) in *Kraskie*. Photograph: A P O

refuses to be bought and remains honest:

As a political play *Kraskie* is a little bit out of the ordinary. It is not a polemical tract concerning itself with the evils of capitalism, the collusion between ideas and exploitation, between arms dealers, property developers and Young Oxford. It is not even a play where a couple of sets of ideologues battle it out, politically, as in Shaw's *Major Barbara*. Another play with the smiling face of gammoning cashed in is:

Kraskie is a piece of exemplary theatre, where the major proposition that a moral person cannot survive under capitalism is stated through a style and set of conventions that are readily understood. That these conventions are taken from fiction is not a sin. As against their emotional authenticity, but it probably one aspect regarding the play as being 'realist' in style but the ideas catholic series. One is aware that there are layers within layers, giving the play its emotional and intellectual near-barbarism.

First there is the Curly figure, a tough, resourceful gun runner who speaks in the hard boiled, argot-riddled style of Law Archer or Philip Marlowe. He is apparently handy with the gun and the law. But he is soft underneath, he worries about his sister, and he is English. That is the first critical irony of the play. In the midst of the soft, corrupt, almost lifeless England there is an Englishman pretending to be Philip Marlowe. What a joke. The second irony is the choice of Guildford as a location. Los Angeles perhaps, but Guildford is a place of crime, murder, bed deeds, a surely ironic. But underneath this is of course, a serious point. It is precisely in places like Guildford and Melbourne that the centres of power lie.

The floating solution to the puzzle of Sarah's death is paralleled by the problem of finding the truth of the way the system works. As Curly says: 'Have you been inside the City of London? Inside the banks and counting houses? It's perfect. Men with silver hair and suits with velvet pockets. Gilling down padded corridors. You could hear the money be my naked in the silver leaves - the sound of

money gathering like moss on the side of a wet building.

All the characters in *Kraskie* are pretty much self contained. The play is not about psychological explanations of why they are like they are. Here seems to regard these characters as examples of certain kinds of individuals, with the exception of Jerry who acts as an optimistic counterweight.

In performance, *Kraskie* is entertaining, and witty, on its surface, some of Curly's lines are very funny and it works quite well as a very thriller. One cannot help but be carried along by the dialogue, which makes a kind of a good pace.

Max Gillies, playing Curly, is no Humphrey Bogart. He is a much more anatomic, inefficient sort of gun runner. I found it a bit difficult to believe that he could ever get it together to run the rackets. But as the performance develops you can see that there is toughness under the fat. Gillies, over the years, has established himself as a particularly good comic actor, with a great stock of physical and verbal inventiveness. But he has always been self contained, apparently not giving much for his fellow performers to work off. I suspect this is part of the joke comedian's make up, but it does make for some disjointed scenes in *Kraskie*. On the other hand the character he is playing is a cynic who doesn't give much away. So there you are.

Tim Robertson is Frank, and puts more of the best performances I have seen from him. There are the gross mannerisms, and the tendency to wind up his character. Indeed Robertson has an authority and presence that could mark a turning point in his career. In *Kraskie* he has a plausible story and he sticks to it. John Rimmer makes his return (acting in memorable style. He is physically striking, full of menace and hidden energies. Given more work, he could be a terrific performer. Ray Mulrow is Jerry, and whilst she gives it a lot of hard work does not really become strong enough to balance the others. Brian Skape and Jack Weiler do some nice work as Mr Dunning, and the Ben/Polio/Steelman,

respectively.

In spite of a few flat spots here and there, and a clumsy script, this production does the play justice. Alan Robertson's direction is best, and when the drury level is high, it works very well. Some have complained about it being set in England, and others that the English accents weren't good enough, or that Australians don't do English accents. That's a lie, but beside the point. Guildford, England is only a metaphor for any other place in the Western world, and having Australians play Englishmen playing Americans is a further wrinkle on an already solid cloth.



Max Gillies and Ray Robertson (Jerry) 'refuses to be bought'. Photograph: A P O

The QTC is concluding the year with a festival of nihilism — David Williamson's *The Department*, Jack Hibbard's *A Taste of Marble*, and Alan Hoggan's *And the Bug Man Rips*. As far as the scripts are concerned it's not a low blow, since all three have been read and proved elsewhere. But *The Department* the first leg of the triad, has been given the benefit of a strong class production with barely a trace of cockamamie or conscious comedy, and it serves both playwright and actors well.

Williamson's most obvious virtue as a writer is that he really does ferment his character types well, he approximates to, and gains from an Australian audience the laugh of recognition and the whiplash that he just like... His disconcertingly solid front from his own experience, and when after having lectured at a Technical Institute called Swinburn he writes a play about a staff meeting in an Institute called Milton once suggests that only the names have been changed to protect the guilty.

It's a virtue however that has not always helped productions of his plays. It's such a rare experience for an Australian actor to sit down to a first reading of a script and to also experience that shock of recognition that so a contemporary. Many productions have wildly overindulged in pursuit larger than life circumlocutions of some of our vocal accents, physical mannerisms, and minor moral failings. It didn't matter particularly in *Don's Party* which doesn't demand such exacting of observation, but it led to some very forced interpretations of a play like *The Misanthrope* which does have more to say about Australian society than the gaudy tale of such irony.

The QTC production of *The Department* has, if anything, overcompensated for that, and it's a pleasant change. One of Joe McCollum's constant virtues as a director is that he has the ability to draw strong and mature performances from actors, driving each of them to react with or away from assumptions about

their characters. The department he has propped up as a cosmopolitan one and Williamson's ability to write funny lines is never allowed to break up the progression of the story in the careful and sustained metaphorism of this approach: the inability of some of the less experienced cast members to consistently achieve the level of convincing characterisation demanded of them makes the end result uneven. But there are enough good performances to carry it off.

It's a production which also shows very clearly the scenes which are well written and those which are not. Williamson is at his best in social comedy, and his scenes get progressively better as more characters arrive on the stage. As each of them passes behind a sophisticated and serene public persona, the wit and cynicism becomes sharper and funnier. When the persona drops (as in monologues or two-headed scenes) the writing becomes awkward and the clothes neither funny nor believable. It's the sort of unevenness that lingers in the playroom could gloss over — and in the process gloss over while the scenes depths the play might contain. The QTC has decided it's a 'belouost' comedy with something to say, and has chosen a style which says a very well.

The most disappointing thing about the decision that this gives is that when we are allowed to consider too clearly what the play has to say it becomes apparent that it really hasn't much to say at all. In the story of an Engineering Department staff meeting set in the Thermodynamics Lab and there is an abundance of beautiful symbols lurking in the background (Thermodynamics for instance is concerned with turning heat into mechanical energy). At the meeting the pompous and conning Head of Department (Bobby) manipulates and bludgeons his way through the disagreements which angry young genius (Peter) seriously minded idiot (John) and humanising one (Mina) have about the

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY

THE DEPARTMENT

Richard Fotheringham

THE DEPARTMENT by David Williamson. QTCO. Theatre opened 18 with 16. Director: Joe McCollum. Designer: James Buchanan. Costumes: JIMMY COO. Set: DOUGLAS HEYDE. Lighting: PETER HOGG. Music: JACOB KATZBERG. Sound: JOE JAMES. Props: BRUCE PAIR. Hair: PAUL MOORE. AI. FETTER. Makeup: Doree. MAN. STYLIST: Merv. RAY. 1812024.

Merv Hindleman: Bruce Pair: Phil Mays and Douglas Wedge: Photo: QTC



way to a running the department. Mine is to be surrounded by compromise and sympathy. Peter by threats, and John by an off-the-cuff heart to heart chat in which Robby demonstrates that though they may quarrel over means, his face and heart are in the right nature, medical place. As the play ends he is left alone, smoking longly the equipment in the department he has guided and fought to.

What is unfortunately revealed in its naked inadequacy is that the play just can't concerned with any real 'feminist' medical issues. I'm reminded of Jean-Luc Godard's remark that if he ever made a film about the concentration camps he would show the suffering of the Jews as all but would concentrate on the suffering of the poor. Camp Commanders who have been told by Headquarters to get 1000 Jews per day and who has only enough for 500. Or, to contrast the idea, the suffering of the anguished who suffers what is happening but who has a wife and children to support, is terrified of losing his job, and solves his conscience by keeping the prisoners working steadily so that they kill as quickly and as painlessly as possible.

Obviously if such a film were made no-one would make the implications. But in Williamson's play the only indication as to what implications actually do lie in a few references to the suffering of the young and idealistic graduates who is sent off to work for Ford Australia. Nothing at all about what he might be doing at Woomera, or the Chemical Warfare Institute near this place or (disputed) the Vietnam war. (The play is set in 1952).

There isn't a real reason in the play, though John is clearly intended to represent that point of view. The argument by which Robby wins his case can be roughly paraphrased thus: "I

know it seems unethical to you that I'm wheezing and coughing and looking about to make the department larger than physics but the way things are organised at present the biggest department will get the new building and you know as well as I do that Australia needs engineers far more urgently than it does physicists.

It's hardly an argument that's likely to impress anyone who understands the absolute dependence of global warfare on the present unfriendly hostility of engineers and physicists. Cheeser's *The Best Room Jew* has more to say in one single question about racism than there is in two hours of *The Department*.

They found that if the gods (immortals) were quick they could escape it all so they took added polytymic to their bodies outside like skin to a blanket. Then they discovered that if the gods jumped under water it seemed burning, so they added white phosphorus and now can burn under water. One drop and it burns to the bone.

I've no doubt that Mr Williamson's view of staff meetings is an accurate one and it makes me despair for the occasional genuine idealistic movement (such as the Political Economy struggle at Sydney Uni) which tries to confront that sort of glib self interest and blinker thinking. Looking at your immediate surroundings with a sarcastic eye is a first start for a playwright, and no-one at present does it better than Williamson. But unless he can also step back and see that little world in all its shallowness and criminality, then his plays will always remain on the level of cynical sentimentalism.



Kate Wilson (Perry) and Mark Henderson (Perry) Photograph: G.F.C.

South Australian Theatre Company of the Playhouse presents

THE LAST OF THE KNUCKLEMEN

by John Powers
Directed by David Williamson

A funny and satirical play about a group of violent and uneducated men in an isolated north-west mining-camp.

With Frank Gallagher, Brian Hodgman, Lloyd Cunningham, Ian Chisholm, John Dick, David Hurlstone, John Pelsley, John Gwynn and Gerald Marx.

PLAYHOUSE
Festival
Centre

September 18-
October 9
Monday 8
Friday 8:30 p.m.
Saturday 5:30
& 8:15 p.m.

BOOKINGS at
Festival Theatre
and John Martin's
(City and Elizabeth)



artistic director

The National Theatre Inc. of Western Australia is seeking an Artistic Director to succeed the present director, Arne Neeme who will be leaving the theatre for overseas at the end of 1977.

The appointment is envisaged for a period of 3 years and the appointee would be expected to join the company between July and September of 1977.

The Artistic Director is directly responsible to the Board of Management for the artistic policy and conduct of the theatre and will be expected to direct a majority of productions and with the Administrator is responsible for the General Management of the Company.

The National Theatre presents productions at the Playhouse Theatre, Perth, and other venues from time to time and receives financial assistance from the Federal and State Governments.

Interested persons should write to the Administrator, National Theatre Inc., 319/8 Street, Perth, Western Australia, before October 31st, 1976.

North Westergummers have had the pleasure to complete a season so far, to achieve the strength and quality of the players offered them. Phoenix Corporate has followed The List of the Stockholders into the main theatre in the Playhouse, and *400 Blows* will succeed *For Whom It Don't Boil Bully* in the Greenroom. The excellent *Master of the Hole* in the Wall Theatre has given us two plays to be produced and directed by Michael Keith: an adaptation of Franz Kafka's *The Trial* and another of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Unfortunately, we have the Western Australian Theatre Company's recent season of *White's Ache* at Victoria Mall directed by Edna Marston and starring Joan Sydney and Alan Cassell. Our three have nothing but good reports. I did manage to see the play *White's Ache* at Victoria Mall, and the play *White's Ache* at Victoria Mall. Our Company's main director, John Marston, for its subject, was the first to be produced.

John Peveret: *The East of the Kouskouma* appeared a fortnight in press. Critics seemed to find it a well enough written piece, but one which did not add up to much. But *The East of the Kouskouma* is more than a slice of life: what the *lg* has something of wider relevance to say about the effect on individual life of living in a war-torn and backward country.

In a glibly wheeled I think will prove on production to be one of Dorothy Hewett's latest. *The Golden Maiden* has a delightful reference to a husband who has run off up North as having had where all the wilderness go. The Northwest of Western Australia has long been a haven for hard-drinking, highly paid refuge for those fleeing from maintenance orders and those exiles from the palace in all States. Why else as one of the characters barborescally comments would they be there?

Here are some of their publicly paraded or privately practiced views, without either an editorial comment or warning, except for the one characterized as whimsy in such contexts. There has always been the fairly balanced mixture of candor and aggression, the gaffes for high status (fervor and enthusiasm) and low status (sarcasm and cynicism) and the balance between the two through conformity with the group's mood and social recognition as an individual. This is evidenced by the tendency toward the use of metaphors that denigrate a variety of the realising of one's name with one which is characterized as inappropriate.

The cook at the walk in this particular household is Tansen, gung-ho and full of banter/pun. When he loses his puff, he says he will disappear from the scene, not only as food, but village life. He could not live with the role of ex-king (like Lata) however shrewd! The play ends with an extended period of *tehriz* (a don't bother who's asking anyway... if Tansen survives that challenge there must be one eventually which he does it). And that's the point.

¹⁰ The discussion is crucial for relationships

lightness in the shape of the script is merely fortuitous and gratuitous. But the appearance is deceptive and hides a really weighty exposition of the particular brand of existence Anne Neher's character was left to undergo as if it should be so in such a play, and that essential acting excellence I was praising in my earlier review would not expect to make creditable things — particularly Robert van Melick's and de Tasse's and James Boer's in *Mad Dog* — bring off their roles with such credulity. A well-paced play but the style is not good. By Geoffrey Gifford and Robert Neher. It is a play that is not to be missed. Though the role of Tessa is played with beauty by Linda Wright. All round a well conceived play of some point well delivered by cast and director.

It is not necessary to compare Little Women to Tolstoy with his *Anna Karenina*, applied to America (that's how — barely more so — than the Currier trope) — to appreciate the range of skills called upon by the Company of men and their ability to meet the challenge. Thriftiness & suggestion in the finely-tuned satirist, Harriet's Miss Westcott (Elizabeth Cady) that together they will scale new heights of American womanhood convey the raw mixture of vulgarity and outrage of supposed middle-class morality which sets the tone of Alan Bennett's *Notes on a Scandal*.

I saw Mr. Bennett's first solo effort *Foxy* (1968) in 1969 in a typist's Mustang, starring John Cazale and the author. My memory is of a rather witty, hanging-in-there piece about the bits and beyond del comic people loosely connected by a thematic plotting. *Radical Darius* is a more interdisciplinary work, sublimating more cunningly contained and demonstrating Bennett's gift of the pointed line, but made sager by a touch of the Joe DiMaggio.

It is inequity one of the most select examples ever of British comic writing, but since in comedy the female is as much a source of pleasure as the unexpected, this is not to do them wrong. There is a pseudo-touché Wilde in Forest, comic vulgarity which is made of the traditions of Max Miller, Arthur Askey, Whistell, Lane and Brighton peer and the gawping of hallowed institutions such as the B.M.A. Not least I think it pretends to be other than an enjoyable, reasonably forgettable comic piece, and it seems unwisely to assign cost to its audience.

His photographs were avoided, and characters and the other structural elements became a list of names within the photographs rather than a list to point out to a reader any sort of world. Rather, he is operating on the fact that he is a writer and trying just to get things. On the structural side, he has tried to undercut expectation by having a Miss Mappes character figure to introduce and point the action. So far, comedy, rather than a more tragicomic, needs a touch more realistic plotting for the ending side and also to be forthcoming to the reader as to what is at stake, such as the end of a dance, a somewhat satirical delivery.

But the trousers fell early and often; the films before, were surely cutaneous in such an effect, the entire gags fell just. And that was sufficient feeling up and a sense of the mad animal being beneath the conformant exterior. For all that such acting is hard work, the poet was obviously enjoying themselves, and they trooped up to the right hand of clowns in their role playing. The necessary left was given to the proceedings by their choosing clearly defined characters for each role, and

HOLE IN THE WALL THEATRE

THE TRIAL

NATIONAL THEATRE RENTH

LAST OF THE KNUCKLEMEN

HABEAS CORPUS

Collin O'Brien

[Title] [Rating] [Release Date] [Director] [Cast] [Genre] [Studio]
 [Description] [Keywords] [Trailer] [More Info]

Ford 1987 2nd Int. Symposium on John Fowles
 Director: Angela Nazzari Gagliardi, St. Denis
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 Director: Angela Nazzari Gagliardi, St. Denis
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 Fax: (415) 841-1111

[illegible]

The Total Management Suite: McGraw-Hill



gently without teasing, playing them to the full.

Over all reigned Geoffrey Gifford, bearded, somewhat pithy, Dr Woblesed a part seemingly sparked by his line 'King too is a weepard monarch'. Robert von Mischakenberg made a suitably effemine, left-footed youth and Kaye Dine a luscious, desirable sex object for him (and sundry others). Margaret Ford, looking as she can in such roles like a super-masculine shock gave Mr. Swallow the obvious, the necessary vulgar point. Eileen Colburn, of whom we see all too little these days, and Margaret Fletcher qualified as an intelligent (sexual) beautiful and cultured (middle-class) man, respectively, after the too was a James Baxter, being up despoiling onto trousers and shortening dignity in the head of the S.M.A. and Dennis Miller as a tokenish salesman.

The two principal comic plays which made the evening for me were given a delightful boost by the fact that the last night was virtually sold out to the Ladies of the Liberal Party. Much of the line of the play comes from the notion of the universal reality of medical profession and the inclination of the members of that august body to have more than a professional interest in their patients' bodies. God knows how many doctors' wives were present. But I did think, considering the double-bang, those well-tested hearts might have spared a thought for their less fortunate brethren when confronted with the many gaps pointing to the hypocrisy which a public/private health scheme encourages (but so, not a matter of compassion supplanted those soft-bottomed stiffs).

In a programme note Malcolm Keith admits to a long obsession with Rina Kake's *The Trial*. For my part I doubt that the personal undercurrent of Kake's prose would thrill me to the stage. But Mr. Keith has found a dramatic means of celebrating Kake's subject, placing the emphasis on other than a political, by fearfully critical.

Joseph K. played with controlled anguish and a seemingly tight grip control on a cast by John Milton, his as his father-in-law figures. They emerge from time to time as specific characters, at other work as a unified and disinterested force. Their faces are made-up in part as grotesque black and white masks, looking as though their features have been caught in some frightening time-snap. The sensation is not a little like the paintings of Francis Bacon. The acting whether in ensemble or as individuals — frightening precisely this as that tale caricature — was chillingly precise. More so are such scenes as Joseph K. speaking to his family — the six figures holding, in grotesque parody, the pose of a family portrait — with the central figure the uncle, having his words stirred by one or other of the family. Different personas which people Joseph K.'s world just tell them not so much individuals as the distorted visions of them were finely portrayed by Jerry McNeil, Mary Hare, Ian King and Andy King.

The chief criticism I have of Mr. Kake's adaptation is that he left in too many and too long passages of the novel, passages which were cumulative and obsessive rather than dramatic in their movement. Perhaps because of this John Milton's portrayal did not seem to grow as well too much on a level vocally and emotionally. But there remain indelible images: a sense of crime and guilt unrelieved to evidence, a final overwhelming feeling of debasement (Mr. Sweeney and morbid sexual guilt).



Dennis Miller (Mr. Sweeney) Elizabeth Caswell (Constance) in the National Theatre production of *Hobbes Corpus Procto. Mr. Theatre*

THEATRE FORAY

FAMILY POSSESSIONS

J.S. Ryan

PERFECT STRANGERS by Ron Blair Directed and designed by Colin George
THEY by KITT TAYLOR, Michael MAGGIE KIRKPATRICK
 Set: JOE SHERRIN Designer: ROB GOULD

FAMILY LOVE by Michael Onda Directed and designed by Colin George
 Set: KITT TAYLOR, Michael MAGGIE KIRKPATRICK
 Set: JOE SHERRIN Designer: ROB GOULD

A MAN OF RESPECT by Ron Blair Directed and designed by Colin George
 Set: KITT TAYLOR, Michael MAGGIE KIRKPATRICK, Mary Anne PIRI, Gailly KIRKPATRICK, Bill Williams, Ray Rance, Maggie KIRKPATRICK, Peter Thompson, Kit TAYLOR, Peter PIRI, Joe SHERRIN, Rob GOULD, Phil HODGE, Colin Onda, David O'Donnell, Peter ZIMMERMAN

The theatre itself is the old lecture room in The Mitten Building, more recently known as A4. It is an oblong tiered auditorium 'in the round', and its new name incorporates the official name. The engine/entrance area is a back stage zone, while above it is a lighting booth with a full view of the acting area. It compares very nicely with the old Nimrod Theatre at Green Factory.

As the general title for the evening's offerings is Family Possessions, and as the word Family is only in the title of the final play, one seeks for anticipation and finds the first clue in the programme, from Colin George:

'The theme of the evening evolved from a discussion with Ron Blair about what one play he had in mind. The word "Possession" was plucked from the conversation, banished as most of the other two authors and he had their independently aged by very different routes, to a family situation — hence the title.'

The first play, Family Love, by English-born Michael Onda, is a solid, straightforward piece, concerned with a Sydney Jewish family, of a mother and father and their young adult son and daughter. The later about to leave home for the first time, to go and live in Melbourne with a married man, a gentile. The story and Jewish plot is breaking up and the play is one of articulated awareness, as parents and children come to their several realisations of what they are and what they are not. Kit Taylor was impressive as David Singer, the father, ageing, resigned, self-aware. David's quiet philosophical and his ritual rejection of his daughter at the end is also the actions of a limited man, in which the tale of life probably always can slowly Maggie Kirpatrick's

Jewish routine, Frances, was especially manipulative, limited and traditional. The strength in playing her reminds one of Celia Frick theatre of the first decades of the century. Whether the play goes to the loss of a family is dubious, but it is interesting as a commentary on the failure of Jewry to change amongst the symbols and it was well served by Colin George's understated but excellent direction.

Perfect Strangers by Ron Blair is something of a tour de force, being a dialogue play, concerned to explore the role of religion, reasons for the existence of a person who has lasted for ten years. The scene is the main room of a city apartment with shelves of books, the focus of which is the formal business of the last encounter between Pip and Alice. She has been married before and had two children before her meeting with Pip. He seems to have certain crises as to his social and even sexual identity, and to be concerned more with the attitude of others, books like the state of which he plays with in a tedious and pretentious behavior and with the question people may hold on to his words and public appearance. Judged at this level, he constitutes a monumental indictment of our education, achievements, general attitude towards culture, and even of our success in transcending the traditional hierarchical/religious positions of the Australian young man. To complete that picture, Pip is also shown to be another surprised and to have absorbed his attitude from his father.

As Taylor played Pip with more confidence and less control than the part would seem to warrant, and the mood had been shifted from the honest searching of an Onda piece, the study of the purity and acidity of a Tennessee Williams lover of the Strangers, with He was particularly effective, however, with the nervous, painful movements of the family person. Pip is needed to be what all the qualities of contempt, violence, indifference and pretense find across his nose, knowing how.

That so much of the play's intention came through was largely due to the skill and understanding of Felicity Gordon as Alice, whose physical and strength in a delicate male part, in K.S. Herbert's 1993 phrase, 'the wall in the shadow of his white shirt'. Australian male was asked to drink, the existence of his femininity, a generous mouth, unworldly, uncertain, quiet and fearful questioning, and need for friendship with her own sex and her lover — one all opposed by the third (absent) character, Pip's loving mother.

Both characters are impossible figures, and yet they succeed, like most of Blair's other protagonists, because they are the vehicle for certain great truths about Australian society and human behaviour. The story of this is less: because both were strangers all the time, he looked femininely and and she to his little, persistent, vindictive and demanding personality.

The third and longest play, Rob Herbert's A Man of Respect is, as the title indicates, 'The Onda spend re told. Set in an Italian household in Melbourne at the present time, the play comes through three zones — the social world of Australia, its culture, and its politics, the eternal world of the Christian (catholic) church, to which all the characters give some part of their silent allegiance, and a world of myth and the realistic re-emergence of killings of vengeance, pictured

by the audience to have overtones from Shakespeare's Othello and Aeschylus, and beyond, but with understood as being the folk eloquence of Colin Onda. In which the Anne family have belonged for centuries in Italy, and which is clearly remembered and understood by all the adult members of the Melbourne household.

The first figure to appear in Anne's Anne's, a woman's image (although played by Felicity Gordon), an eternal Blake (as the Greek make clear to us) who suffers, miserable grief and other has, in his last look at, accompanied the male who, in his Christian worship, with his contempt of the uncertainty or even blasphemy of his own people, in an offer of his father's brother, Mary, introduced to an evenness of our family home, since his father was a member of the Honoured Society and he has already realized his duty of vengeance, even before his death, which is the Society. His killing of Egidio is a dog in a ruthless killing of his own gentile, likeable character, as well as a warning to the world of his own death. His Queen is a dramatic student, was astonishingly successful in the Greek role, Maggie Kirpatrick's Rose, the Greek, was gentle, positive, and vulnerable — hurt by his husband's sublimity, the play of her own loneliness and his study. The one pure figure in the family was the young Anne, clearly an unattractive girl of a quiet figure who is more of her place's light for her father, and in the first to feel sorry. Kit Taylor's Egidio the hero, was not the best of his, he had the first two plays but it certainly highlighted this role's variety.

The play is a realistic powerful, a total experience, and a fitting climax to the inauguration of the theatre. Colin George's strength as a director was simply present, but it was in A Man of Respect that he was able to display his talents in their theatrical part. It was in this play too, that he showed his eye in the ring as the fourth professional actor by playing the leader of the Chorus.

In every way, these three plays were a fine and unexpected offering to the audience, as well as a reminder of a variety of styles and responses. Perhaps the play is that the audience were limited by the size of the theatre, and the short season. Doubtless, this is a pity, but it is a pity to manage, but it would be fitting to have the Drama Department of the University of New England, if these plays were to return linked performance elsewhere.



Kit Taylor (Egidio) and Felicity Gordon (Anne) in A Man of Respect. Photograph: Rob Heyman

succeeded by a closer confrontation upon the stage and the text. Quixote had become more comic and more pathetic. He no longer triumphed as I said in my first review, but accepted his fate half as clown, half as saint.

Susanne Sewitz's Aldonza had become a fusion of the musical, the rape gang of musicians had shed their difference as what had been a daringly explicit place of pornography and become tough and dirty. And as Cervantes the conjurer of reality, Roman Ferns could accept the confusion of the will as it applied to the Inquisition itself in its opposition to the romantic imagination, had been replaced by Peter Adams, clearly winning more between men.

What is it like this time? The director reproduces the phrase of the earlier productions but the form is no longer innovative or daring. It is transparently traditional. The music has assumed the nostalgic familiarity of every famous old musical and has the audience applauding the introduction to each number. And the whole performance reflects the sea change in Don Quixote himself — older, sadder and by his own admission a failure and his admired Aldonza plunger and comfortably housewifely. At the end, when with the death of Quixote the Inquisition calls for Cervantes and he and Sancho make the slow climb heavenward, what once for me had been the triumphant assertion of the soul freed from the burden of the flesh, had become an expression of human patience under threat of very real physical pain.

And yet for all the modesty of the production style the work is as compelling as ever, and the death of Quixote and one of the most poignant moving stage stories. The secret lies firstly in the poem itself with which sets first written and which gives the work a moral backbone rare in commercial musicals, and secondly in its ambiguity by which the sea change is accomplished.

Charles West who has now given over 1,000 performances in the role, has said that it was the portrait of failure in the first instance that attracted him. Failure has, of course, been a preoccupation of Australians since the colony began and both Cervantes and Don Quixote are the kind of heroes for which we have a natural sympathy. Mr West's portrait of failure has changed relatively since the work was written and yet paradoxically it has stayed the same. The change has been less in the mind of the actor than in the mind of the audience and so that ingredient of ambiguity in the text which makes this possible.

The year 1956 was a turning point in public attitudes both within Australia and the U.K. It is the Vietnam war and Don Quixote at that time reflected a spirit of heroic optimism in the face of political immorality and barefaced cynicism. People responded to the challenge of the impossible dream, wanting to believe that by passion one might shake the corner stones of the world — that legs were indeed the enemy of truth.

The years that followed — international oil politics, Watergate, the end of the Vietnam war, in Australia the upheaval in Federal Government — have brought about a disillusionment with that romantic truth and with a compassion. Men of La Mancha inflect all that is in the eye and ear of the viewer. So all that remains is a show that must be seen — for nostalgia for a good day, for some good performances or just to see what makes a show outlive its managers.



Enter Quixote, Charles West and Susanne Sewitz. Photograph: J. C. Williams

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helped us to come to terms with violence and planned miscegenation.

All phases of society are represented here. The priest sings to his G string in a display of lewdity. It is left entirely to dignity the girls most concerned with her feelings than the girls of kerensans that covered Pelech. Dad is hung up on Hollywood and Winona (Chenille). During these displays of private intelligence, the boy confronts the audience with those questions (what this play would cynically call 'mugging questions'). It is one person before himself to death is a totally private act. But everybody reacts about it. It becomes a public act and therefore, leaves its true significance where people can perceive it for the masses. 'How can this dilemma be presented dramatically theatrically?' the boy asks.

The priest goes on to lecture us about non-accidental death. He admonishes parents to protect their tots from mischief by the Meneholes. In Chenille's poem, the boy continues to talk about the madness of martyrdom.

In one thunderous scene, the old couple is confronted by the crowd of students. The students shout protests at them. But the old couple's answers are always pet and amply unironed, as if out of the mouths of governors, general or their secretaries.

Carol Woodrow apparently worked her young actors three months on this, and it shows in their tough approach to the script. All the phrases, all the rhetoric, is effectively turned on when worked out during the workshops. There were improvised scenes which changed in the two times I saw the production. The most moving of these was the argument between the boy and girl by them lying with each other. This period lasted maybe ten minutes in which the male chanted out the female for making cold coffee and complaining his poems to be done in several roles, with the girl spouting out the boy's miserable coffee. Later the boy is given a birthday party and is called upon to make a speech about his future. This speech too is largely improvised and was handled with immense skill by Rupert Burns.

The long and long period just off. Every time is physicalized by the cast in some meaningful, or purposefully meaningless, attitude. This leaves the audience with a visual after-image of the language. The play itself is about memory, how we recall certain news events. And the physical motions of the cast express the intensity with the image. It is a prelude to the events in Czechoslovakia after the Russian invasion.

The performance matched the commitment. But I was especially taken with that of Rupert Burns. When the play called for vast pleading, he had the strength and when it called for submission, he had the depth. Tim Mackay too, as the priest was truly excellent, especially as the scene in which he reads Pelech by playing with a kerensans can and shattering himself with fear.

Alan Burns and Charles Macarone wrote Pelech six years ago, as an attempt to come to terms with the act of an individual after it had been totally 'intercepted' by the world's press. The rest of us watched as Pelech burned and judged him on the basis of morality, ideology (take your pick), common sense (only a nut would do a thing like that) or indifference. Our opinions were shaped more by the clothes, rhetoric, the garish plots, stage-setting, sets, references, pop lyrics or music accompanying them by our private reflection on the event. It is these opinions that the play treats with grace. The death of the event itself might go unreported for lack of the right phrase.



Tim Mackay as the Priest in Pelech. Photograph: Canberra Youth Theatre

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Edwin Hodgeman, Edwina Bentley and Debra Gray in *Major Barbara*. Photograph S.A.T.C.

the shot of super-efficient weapons, rocket-like dreams, and lowering galaxies, all enclosed in a red back-line box, facets which speak with an eloquence and apparatus which diminish by contrast to the commitment to washed ceilings and paneled walls, in act one and even the whitewashed Salvation shelter of act two. It is possible to imagine the whole play set within the kind of selective self-observation which the end of act three suggests. By observing Shaw and saving the capping off effect until last, however, the production may have sacrificed some of its contemporary effect.

'Defence quote up by 18p.c.' in these uncertain times, the highest priority of any national government must be military security."

Budget Speech

Reverend Father the country has explored the ground of the play with stupor. Apart from his performance both Edwin Olsen and George Shearer as Bill Walker (which drew spontaneous first night applause), the cast as a whole have grown into the play and its rhythms with assurance. The production, after a week, has found balance by taking the class and intellectual tensions work for themselves instead of pressing them into the service of self-projection and stage personality.

It has been said that for a variation there is an equal and opposite road in. George Ogilvie has made that line of physics a clear truth for his stage Olsen, Shearer, Patrick Frost (Snoddy Price), and Edwina Hodgeman (Adolphus Cresset) turn matter into energy which first follow performers.

In a play notable for the vehemence of its verbal attack, Mr. Ogilvie is tactful of needlessly

establishing such set past divides. Lady Broome's stately ruling her domain, Snoddy Price silently (almost) filling his stomach, Major Barbara's stately turning the seal of her torment and her salvation, absorbed and pinned attention for the inevitable avalanche. Frost in particular with his first mouthfull of so long as bread and meat, showed over the cruc of the whole act, what the value what the cost?

"I saved her from the crime of poverty."

Underneath

"Yes the seven deadly sins: food, clothing, living, rent, sex, respectability, and children."

Underneath

"Budget changes hole for men in the street."

Headline

"The original hole budget is set by \$33m."

Headline

An Major Barbara, Edwina Bentley worked with discipline and honesty towards Shaw's vision of the apocalypse—the raising of Hell to Heaven. Assuming the Underneath's independence of mind, and the freedom person for possessions, organization, and mothering she forged a link with Edwin Hodgeman's Clara which proved ultimately to be as persuasive as a critically appeared improvable—a point enough measure of Galsworthy and Shaw, *Blood and Fire*.

If there is a place where the production takes within its own parameters is in the interpretation of Lady Broome. It is important for the play that she is, as the programme note suggests, an avowed believer in free speech and a democratic hierarchy yet at odds with these principles in natural materialism. Debra Gray appeared to acknowledge this yet

made the character more sterner, colder, than she must be in order to make Underneath earn its point, and Barbara's her mastery of freedom. Because of this approach for other choices, Sarah, Stephen, and in a sense Lomax, have to be played as simple. They are not, nor need they be. Property, duty, and the belief in immutable rights and wrongs matter at least plausible as moral sustenance for some human beings otherwise what is the point of Shaw's comprehensive demolition of the edifice of which they are cornerstones.

"The world corrupts its idealistic clean engines and dynamo, but it won't sweep its old prejudices and its old mistakes and its old religions and its old political constitutions!"

Underneath

"In becoming completely the procreation that higher government spending on a bigger deficit may be appropriate to ease the problem of unemployment, the treasurer has chosen a course of economic mismanagement, which coincides exactly with the political ideology of his party." — *50c post*.

"The play of mine, Major Barbara, is, those both true and inspired but whoever says that it all happened and that fact is a misunderstanding of it comes in believing that it is a record of an actual occurrence, as, according to conjure, a fact and a fact and is fairly solemnly denounced and cursed as such by me, the author, in all posterity."

Then Shaw orders himself and his play to us... and to all posterity.

STOP PRESS Budget left to U.K. Shaw "— *The Advertiser*

"Wait your salvation now!" — *Bill Walker*.

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[illegible][illegible]

Maria: Yes, why?
 Maria: I was going to leave him.
 David: But that doesn't make sense.
 Maria: Ask her about the champagne.
 Maria: Ask the man.
 Maria: You can't miss me for money.
 Maria: Having and using their advantages.

[illegible]

The Duchess of Malfi

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Director's Casebook

THE DIRECTION OF GORDON CHATER IN STEVE J. SPEAR'S

THE ELOCUTION OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

by Richard Wherrett

THE DIRECTOR ...



REDACTED 2000 1987 is one of the three Atlantic Oceanic in all Nations Theatre. After teaching and free-lands directing in England for numerous in Australia and was appointed Associate Director of the Old Tote. In 1979 he has been with several productions at the Old Tote and in 1979 since which he has directed many more there including *Shogun*, *Richard III* and *West End and Champagne River*. Here he talks about the process that led up to the production of *Benjamin Franklin* (The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin).

The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin received its world premiere at Nimrod's Governance theatre on Saturday the 28th of August 1979, starring Gordon Chater in the solo role of Robert O'Brien directed by Richard Wherrett and designed by Larry Redwood. It was stage managed by Melvyn La Grosse and the personal assistant to Gordon Chater was Nick Bailey.

INTRODUCTION

I wrote this introduction at the morning of the 28th, that is, we open tonight. It seems fitting that I say before the play receives its public and critical judgement that I believe to be a remarkable work. It is provocative in content, innovative in form, explores an amazing range — high farce, bitter wit, gentle competition, and tragic seriousness, it is tough, witty, and very highly skilled. It is also timely. Whether this is enough to make it "go" is another thing altogether — the gamble is theatre. The only is that by the time this is read, the judgement will have been made.

It first came to me toward the end of last year, sent to me at Nimrod's by Hilary Linstead from MML. Casting the author's agent. While it was a case of *Young Mr. T* I was delighted by both, and immediately suggested to my co-director-director John Bell and Kim Herley we should, if possible, do both, my preference being at the time for *Mr. T*. It seemed the work was exceeding fast — the rate was on for the night, which proved impossible for *Mr. T* as they were to remain with the Circle company that *Assault* (which was on to meet) a production

of it in Sydney in May leaving us with *Benjamin*. Meanwhile I'd read four or five other works of Steele's, all of them proving very exciting, though most interesting was the degree and manner in which they departed from each other. I believed to be a remarkable talent. I had, as yet, not read him.

CASTING

Robert O'Brien is an ageing actor, out of work a lot on the shelf, "induced" to doing speech defects for a dub but nevertheless this is a pedestrian to romance most married transsexual — that is, his sexuality is highly complicated. He is "into" anything, as Steve says, "strictly a fantasy man" as he describes himself. He is eccentric, comical, outrageous, intelligent, sensitive, witty, and tough. Most of all, he is positive, in the sense that he initiates life. The rage happens to him, and as a result, he becomes a victim of tragic circumstances. At the same time, he is a very ordinary human, the guy next door.

Who was 55, fat and outrageous? Much more to the point who could actually handle the demands of the role. He must sustain the audience's involvement alone on stage for a first act of 15 hours and a second, lying static on bed for 36 minutes. Most demanding of all was the changes the first act demanded: not just the costume changes — ten in all, which would need to be done some times as little as ten seconds — but more subtle the changes of mood, attitude, some resulting from the constant time shifts. On an average four or five times per page there was a change in time and situation, some of which occurred after only fifteen seconds of action. It was an extraordinarily demanding role.

Three people I thought would be marvellous — Gordon Chater, Alex Hay, and Frank Thring. Frank Thring was in Melbourne, Alex Hay would be directing for the *Time*, we sent the script to Gordon Chater on the 2nd of February. Two hours later he agreed to do it.

THE VENUE

As I noted, we believed the play had a focus beyond that of the conventional sex-week run upstairs. At that time, the downtown theatre had just opened. The very serious need for a "trial" season for new plays was threatened once again. The difficulty in Australia of opening "out of town" is a serious one. A venue for resolving textual and production and performance difficulties before the package is delivered to the front pressure of a large audience (and attendant and demanding critics) is desperately needed, but there is no "out of town." Despite a star in the corner of it, Benjamin was a new play for an essentially unknown (in Sydney) author, and the play was brought up to street and textual difficulties.

The consideration that the play begin in the quietly downstairs at Kings was chosen for a doubt by the fact that it simply would not fit. Apart from an extremely narrow hall leading — a living room in a Sydney terrace with a mass of people and lighted candles around the play space — it demanded two Shakespearean levels with Mosses Lee's gables and a secret compartment in the back. UP stairs (as projected and framed so as to break an impact, directly in front, the first window to have been destroyed through their elaborate lead on stage) and it cutted back to explore (every night) as a result, and all else on stage sufficient to justify being described as an act of self-destruction. Indeed it is true that some of those things are not working as well as they should, but nevertheless the decision was taken to open downstairs with the risk of moving on to a larger audience and a longer run subsequently.

THE PLAY

February 1976 — my first meeting with Gordon. He is immensely enthusiastic, which is pleasure in itself. His immediate agreement on crucial points — that the play be two acts. It was in fact written in three, each of about 45 minutes. Apart from the fact that I had intended something of a bare doorway, especially more than one, I was could not see the need for justification for it here. And, we feared that it would protect the presence of the one man performance on the audience to entering point. The third act is an obstacle in the mental rehearsal — a challenge of set for that would defend an interest from. So I told to Steve the argument that the first two acts become one. He agrees. Reluctantly.

While the play demands a naturalistic setting, it is however, not naturalistic, mainly in the convention established by Robert's talking to the non-existent other characters. This is achieved by the simple device of stepping to a side spot at each such moment. Also the time jumps break the naturalistic flow in their intricacy and complexity. But the structure is sound. Three levels of activity are explained — Robert alone talking to himself or comforting his relationship with the dead of William. Robert in communication via letters and the telephone with friends and acquaintances, and Robert actually in contact with same. His behaviour. The persona differs immediately from one to the other. It is Robert alone that is most integrated to the one main play content and the roles of transmission as subject matter.

About conversations I know very little before we started in researching the subject, particularly with the help of the Deanehouse Club in Sydney. I have been able to bring in particular that it is perhaps the most solitary of sexual acts. Indeed the Shakespearean elements partly to

confirm the solitariness. Though the pleasure of dressing up may be heightened by the presence of and acceptance by other people (transsexual or not), the pleasure does not require a partner in any way. Secondly the fear and guilt still attached to the act, the lack of acceptance in a way that barely applies at all any more (particularly if it is a service to be practised in secret). Indeed Robert and Bruce are very lucky to have each other to share the experience with. On learning this, I understood in a quite real way what the reasons for the decision to make it a one man play. Robert is utterly alone. Being alone is essentially what the play is about.

And the other characters, the real inside achievements, how clearly they exist, how real their presence and their personality feels, achieved solely through Robert's reactions to them and his descriptions of them. Benjamin is incomplete, wifely, wonderfully bold and delightfully chaotic. He is also frighteningly old. The story of the play is that Benjamin is really the sophisticated man and Robert the innocent child, the expected seduction of Benjamin by Robert is reversed and the play is really about adult seduction. Of Bruce Fisher the establishment, we know he is totally stuck in in the careful middle-class morality model, but we actually see his underside — gay, flighty, nervous, anxious and vulnerable — his first love, Victor. Mrs. Franklin, when smiling in her PJs, is tight, repressive, bitter and utterly never. Moreover is real, mad, and helpless. Maurice is a stoned, gay, romantic and vindictive — eight years later she is no doubt looking in the limelight, accused from her part in bringing on the Transsexual Terror of Double Day.

The play is a lot about the conflict between private and public morality, beauty and injustice and the vulnerability of age to the twin stars of youth and beauty.

DESIGN

Larry Eastwood was due for annual holidays in May, so apart from a preliminary discussion before he went, we did not get down to details until his return in June, a few weeks before rehearsals were due to begin. The original brief involved the decision that we would design once only, that the set built for *Remed Downstairs* should be as complete and finished as possible so as to save any possible trouble the play might. Thus what is normally a loose \$2000 budget for Downstairs' shows at *Remed* became upward of \$3000 for set, costumes, props, signs etc. Robert's director for the first of Act 1 was to be \$130 alone. July 1st. The design in first draft form is completed — necessarily a conventional box set, doors BS and DP for front door/bedroom and kitchen/bathroom respectively, key window centre, basic furnishings if it is a bar we both say. How can we fit it toward something more special, something striking something less ordinary not realistic. Colours having not been chosen, we settle on a monochromatic concept — white, floor, ceiling and main furniture all being one colour. The colour must be dark, so as to minimise spill of light on the sets spot sequences. We decide on a dark red, and the texture to be velvet — floor wall is the lot. This is intended to heighten the sensuality of the piece. Robert's bedroom for the last of things and the waxy like beam which his home provides, safe from the prying eyes of Mrs. Franklin opposite. This should intensify for the audience the intimate effect on him that the police raid causes, the dressing — costume — lamps — lace —

posters, key-board, record-GC all in intimate of music and in a kind of undomesticated clutter should relieve the monochrome from being boring itself.

The set and set is more challenging in that it provides the possibility of a shift even further from naturalism, something that will express not only the total weakness of a hospital ward, but also the ruthless nihilistic sense of nihil of Robert's love to death and sleep. I highly consider. We think of a photographer's studio, the effect that the role of every paper frame eliminating line, achieving a kind of special vacuum. Larry suggests means a final role of the bed would catch the reflections on infinity, suspending the other beds. We settle for that, and a curing covers cloth behind and the saying all white-white bed, sheets, spread, pillows, duveton. Let with a front. This should diffuse light and suggest the state of not-being, "let and", that Robert is suffering from. As well, it will provide a striking contrast to the first set set. Problem. How to achieve such a major change with two people in twenty minutes!

THE REHEARSALS

24th June — A read through with Gordon, one month prior to rehearsals officially beginning. His attack by his technical accomplishments, the fact of his reading the range of his voice, his presence in his living room it is necessarily big — "It's the way we

... THE ACTOR

Photograph: Harold



were "traced," he says. Could be a problem in time 88 (near Nimrod where one needs to 88 rather than 99) (pays). First he'll run at 1 1/2 hours — too long. Steve was at the end of the run, in time to catch Gordon (it is all over the last few minutes). A decision to postpone to October. The main and his predicament are relevant systems. We find it should be located to wherever it is played.

14th July — Larry Lunsford points us for a working dinner. Gordon buys champagne. The whole is quickly very good.

15th July — Gordon, Larry and I need to discuss costumes. Gordon's experience from 1966 is invaluable in solving changing problems, especially in the engineering of costumes — the use of mirrors, blue fronts and backs, a few odd trousers etc. Gordon reports the 1st of the book — two and a half weeks before rehearsal start!

21st July — A meeting with Steve. The coming of the first two acts has quite considerably changed the shape of the structure as it started. What would have been the beginning of the second act is now 45 minutes in the first act, a crucial time for the action to be gathering pace, whereas it is at present a sequence of business incidental to the action. I'm also concerned that the thrust of the narrative, which is so strong, dominates the last quarter of the act, whereas at present it is interrupted by another sequence of lessons. Two decisions: 1) to cut a deal of the business which used to appear at 3, simply lying it to put the beating of the words and something more strongly. 2) to cut some of it, and bring it together, the second and third lessons, thus that with their conclusion, the action line pushes forward

towards the end of the act — this includes the two revelations to Robert that Benjamin's girl friend is a boy and Benjamin's attempt to seduce Robert with the "inferior boy with the terrible phallus."

25th July — First day of rehearsal. Two factors dominate: 1) Gordon is off the back, and 2) blocking the play is virtually self-evident, being determined by fixed location lights and entrances and the furniture. Hence very quickly sequence by sequence falls in to place as regards the beats of moving and talking, thus that last we've been rehearsing for ten or fourteen days. Very strange, very encouraging, somewhat disquieting.

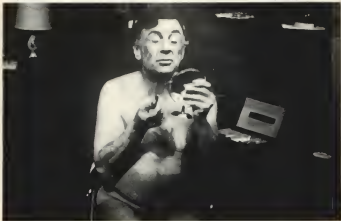
2nd August — The following Monday, by which time we have plotted our way through the whole play twice. Everything going very smoothly. I catch myself wondering am we too far advanced — what will we do in the third week? The next day Gordon is rushed to the intensive Care of Ballman Hospital with a suspected growth in the bowel in stone in the kidney or whatever. I am so heavily worried he may not be able to continue at all, and so mainly not until team are completed at the end of the week. I focus myself for Monday's completion thought. In fact, Gordon is out the following Sunday, week but well, and we resume on the Tuesday — exactly one week lost.

I think it's important that the effect of this event be properly realized. To lose a quarter of rehearsal time should theoretically be disastrous under any circumstances. The rehearsal process is one in which a series of perspective is crucial — a sense of knowing where one has to get and by when. Such a sense was totally thrown out the window in our case. I think in

retrospect, I hope, it has not been dressing to us, but only because of the original fact that Gordon had come with the lines down, which has put us somewhere ahead. On his return, it was as if the week had never existed — we picked up exactly where we'd left off. But it did put a special strain on the final week of work, for whereas that week is normally spent just getting on to the stage what one has rehearsed, and adopting the technicalities of a new space, the set, costumes, actual props, lights and sound, we've now also had to attend to a mass of detailed refinements in the performance and production which would in fact have been the work of the last week. It placed a more than usual weight on the function of the previous of which we had six rather than three having put the opening back three days. Out of which I needed to give enormous notes in the gapped for the things to fall into place. It did it, but on the Thursday before opening one week later than I would have hoped. But time enough for opening. Of course the running in process itself is hidden.

10th August — The morning spent in 1966, who had so generously provided a studio for the recording of the final sequence just as John Law himself had given of his own life and personality. Nonetheless, it was a one take situation, so the absolute necessity to get it right first. The interesting technical point here is that John Law's voice was already down on one tape, the other voices on a second. Some brilliant editing by Tony Verheijen of BWW resulted in the final version sounding genuinely as if the phone calls were happening contemporarily.

(Photograph: *News*)



MAKING UP

11th August — A first, very rough, run through. The first half is well 1 hour 25. Still too long. Irrespective of the quality of play or playing I believe it is extremely dangerous to play a half over the hour. I aimed to get it down to 1 hour 10. This is not some dress rehearsal. This is always painful, but most of all when the material is good I believe all we have out to be very good stuff, but the other need was greater. Some more sequences of business got the ship, and some of the lessons which are inherently incidental to the action, though not the character. We have this week been running at 1 hour 16 more (or less depending on laughs) which seems to be holding well. The hard and hot auditorium makes it more difficult of course. I am wondering too if even the intensity of the commitment is, in this case, as it usually is, a gain so that the play is so confronting so big. After all, the seats, though the window do rarely land in the audience's lap and Gordon's readiness is within graspable distance. The rest of the week was spent working each morning and running each afternoon with Gordon still considerably weakened from his week on a glucose diet.

16th to 22nd — The Turner stretch. The week of coping with technicalities, the crew having only theaterly meetings and evenings to work as we used the day to catch up the lost rehearsal time. Under that pressure, Gordon hoped, expected, wanted everything to be there on the Monday morning, instead finding a fatty, unpainted, undressed set. No lights, many of the major props still to be done, half the costumes, though meticulously made at the sound. It was to be a further eleven days before the last details were finished. Gordon facing his first preview on the Saturday. Nimrod's crew had been forced to the limit the week before with the fit up for *The Penultimate Officer* — it was impossible to achieve any earlier. We had our one snappy moment as a result of this tension when he asked me for the fourth time would the telephone work properly. Our agents, having called, he said, 'You must remember I'm not going about desperately in need of a success.' His comment deserves reporting, as does his generosity and his perfectionism.

THE FIRST PREVIEW

22nd August Gordon goes like a steam train, a restless marauder, furious, physical performance, in which he dared not wait for the slightest of site mistakes in case it stopped altogether. It was all wrong, but my unforgettable night of stark error and brilliant madness.

TO FINISH

Successive previews go until the Wednesday saw Gordon relaxing more and more, and a variety of audience reactions. I do believe some never recover from his first entrance naked. It was terrible, and absolutely right, posing only the problem of when do we go from here. But something was wrong still, his feeling of responsibility, obviously interested in a one man play to keep the strains moving, to do an afterword was making him push the audience to keep up with him rather than allow them to come to him. A sense of strain in the actor/audience relationship prevailed. On the Thursday the role given and taken, it melted away. At this point in time, I know I have seen the play once in the Thursday preview when it was as I believe Gordon and Davis and myself wanted it to be. It will be subsequently more or less that



— BREAKING DOWN

(Photograph Nimrod)



Playwright



THE EVOLU

M B When productions, before *The Education of Benjamin Franklin* have you had professionally staged?

S S The first one was called *Sand*, a musical (that was staged) in Adelaide early in '73. The next was called *Africa*, another musical, which was based on the voodoo-like style, and was at the From Factory in early 1974. A thing called *The Resurrection of The Little Prince* who couldn't laugh as performed by Young Me at the *Angels of the Great Depression of 1929* (M B: hereafter called Young Me), which I'll write down for you later, which was staged first of all at the Festival Centre, Adelaide, at The Space and then again at the Belton in Sydney for two weeks. It folded because of financial pressures. Mainly because one of the producers pulled out. I'll be rewriting it and it'll be staged at the Marmad Theatre, early next year.

M B How did you get into theatre? Did you have a background of acting or anything?

S S I got into an university. I was studying Law.

M B Where?

S S Adelaide. I got pretty pissed off with Law. I found it boring. Rich college people and it was such a terrible course. I started getting into university revues. I started writing for them and acting in them. I had a fair bit of success with them, particularly in the writing field. Finally I dropped out of Law and thought,

"Well, when I go out into the great big wide world I'm going to be an actor." So I went to Melbourne looking for fame and fortune. And didn't find it. I ended up spending a year wandering around until Stud went on. And then that sort of made me \$500. I thought that was going to be my big break and it wasn't. I went into a cheap decline after that. But then on and that sort of made me another \$500. Went into a cheap decline after that. Then got sort of various jobs with Crawford, the ABC and stuff. Just acting.

M B Did you have any acting training?

S S No.

M B You just wanted to be an actor and not yourself in a position to be selected for parts?

audacity can lead to repetition and opportunity. Yet Australia's subsidised theatres are choking commercial theatre to death by providing audiences with levels of technical production at prices the commercial theatre cannot equal. By the time audiences discover the language they are getting an unsatisfying commercial theatre may be out of the picture. With it will go the development of directors who regard living vision and energy to the Australian theatre (where something is changed the Australian Director in Australia will continue at the level of cheap mediocrity which all lament but most perpetuate.

Artistic Directors are an endangered species in the subsidised Australian theatre. The present system rewards administrators who can phrase proposals, appease Boards and balance budgets. But policies must be shaped by those with a sense of theatre's function in its society: a clear vision of the nature of theatrical communication and a personal taste in dramatic materials and theatrical styles. There are Artistic Directors who can phrase proposals and balance budgets but often well-intentioned but unqualified businessmen assume the theatre artist's job. Consider the ramifications of this practice. Plans are selected with an eye to pleasing the entire audience (an impossibility) or with the intention of pleasing one segment of the total audience with each show (an education which serves to anger several segments of the audience with each production). Seasons are bland lists of plays that reflect race or politics. Additionally a larger (and more precise) personal individual artistic taste goes on either less or as long as they remain locally responsible, and directors and designers produce results which are idiosyncratic rather than to the theatre's purposes. An example: the S.A.P.C. *Cavalier* in which the scenic designer introduced a gothic overhang into the classical Roman world and the costume designer compounded the confusion with a classical Japanese silhouette which included Empire waltzlines which the audience probably assumed were feminine on those super masculine winners of Shakespeare's Rome. The result was an unacceptable production which audiences disliked. The long range result will be a falling off of attendance necessitating additional outside CATCH 22.

Only when the theatre's survival is threatened by audiences might these happen. Directors who gamble on their season count disaster by audacity and walk with danger daily. Only then will develop theatres that speak with a clear voice. Some of those theatres will find audiences anxious to listen.

Australian designers are strangling themselves on their budgets. Every bureaucrat knows that the size of each year's budget depends on how much is expended this year. So designers spend and spend regardless of the needs of a production. Plays become excuses for scenic experiments. Actors become shipwreck to get glorious disasters on the stage. Plays are chosen so the way makes say something to do. The greater the influence of the design staff the less the play is well served, the more the audience is bored, the fewer actors it buys, the more the subsidy grows, the more money there is for designers to play with. CATCH 22.

Australian actors are starving for work of literary and artistic merit. There are very few theatres, and very few roles and most are poorly. Subsidy leads theatre to invest in language, props, like scenery and elegant programs. Yet audiences come to see actors,

WHAT TO DO? HOW TO ESCAPE CATCH-22?

Reinforce subsidy and eat risk spending

- 1 Reduce the subsidy of all theatres presently receiving funds by 50%, thereby forcing restructuring of priorities.
- 2 Subsidize, at threshold level, those theatres at each major city, thereby creating competition.
- 3 Use make some % of subsidies for special purposes:
 - A Playwrights-in-residence. Give the writers something to sit on, so they won't rush for repetition and attack them to companies as they write in the theatre and not in the library.
 - B Audition Development. Support talent sales to groups that might become theatrespace — factory workers, students, military clubs.
 - C Training. Mandatory training for all actors under contract.
 - D Actors salaries. Protect against disproportionate budgeting for non-

human resources

6 Introduce functions

- 1 An annual audition which directors from all theatres attend and at which all actors are from training schools and any actor who has not worked on stage during the preceding year may be seen.
- 2 Focusing of productions from one theatre to another, thereby providing audiences and critics with the quantity and variety of theatre they need, and making comparisons of the work of all companies.
- 3 Tri-annual evaluations of the quality of each company's work by a team of non-related international theatre experts, as a way of assessing applications for continuing subsidy.

by giving to select which theatre live. Actors earn more on TV and film jobs, so consider stage work a luxury they can rarely afford. Audiences discover the quality of stage acting inferior to the quality of TV acting on major programmes. Theatres invest more and more in physical trappings, trying to lure them back. Audiences watch good acting on TV. Theatres ask for larger subsidies. CATCH 22. When theatres do pay an actor competitively, they purchase the actor's proven skills, rarely providing him with additional training, rarely stretching him to play what he has not previously played, rarely engaging him to extended and varied seasons. Recall the actor starves for work of artistic merit, becomes a commodity and has a terrible stop the highest bidder. TV agent CATCH 22. This must not always have been true of Australian theatre. When one considers the handful of Australian actors who have become international stars of the magnitude of Sir Caldwell, Les McCann, Peter Finch and Dame Celine it is necessary to think favourably of a time when actors played in non-subsidized repertory, learned their craft and delighted their audiences.

Codes struggle as their own words. They write to support the theatre. As they look at and understand its social importance. But there is a little theatre presented that they must refuse from imposing their judgments for

lack of starving audiences. Accordingly, they lower their standards and give token approval to unacceptable productions, thus perpetuating work which alienates the audience, thus ensuring the lowering of standards. CATCH 22. The only way critics can introduce punitive standards is by comparing the efforts of several theatres by subsidizing only a few theatres; the present system precludes that; perpetuates poor criticism and contributes to the steady decline of Australian theatre.

Australian audiences are starving for work of theatrical merit. There is a little to see. Too little of what is seen is good enough to encourage them to stay away from the TV set, to return to the theatre to contribute their presence, intelligence and energies to developing the Australian theatre.

To can mark subsidy means to take responsibility for the expenditure of funds. It means being answerable to the voters for the policies which shape their theatre and the quality of theatre which receives their support. It means introducing a place like practice of responsible local administration.

But it could also mean the introduction of an profoundly moral theatrical attitude. It could mean escape from the CATCH-22 which is starving the Australian theatre by forcing money down its throat. It could mean salvation for the spirit of the Australian theatre.

Set for Bernard's Maritime Theatre Photograph: Mike Giddens



TWO YEARS WITH THE TOTE

Bill Redmond

BILL REDMOND is the artistic Director of the Old Tote Theatre Company. He has spent much of his time in and out of the theatre for over 20 years. Before that he spent many years in England playing and directing in the theatre and in the English (English) including television. He has been the artistic director of the Old Tote Theatre Company since 1974. He has also directed and acted in many other productions. Engaged?



"Look back," the actor asked me, "every year two years at the Tote." Rather as it was the year from the top of Bill's head, I suppose.

Well, in the belief that no-one will be very interested here goes — from the actress who wrote, asking with whom she had to sleep through she pleased a less delicately to get an audition, to the reviewer whose extensive knowledge of theatre led him to take to heart my flippant remarks about Wodehouse — "I got the four best artists I could find and let them get on with it" — and actually used it as the basis of his review.

My first job at the Tote was to learn as much as I could about the work of as many artists as possible — and in the shortest time.

The two obvious ways to do this were auditions and attendance at as many other theatres as I could get to. It is really something how often you can go to the theatre in Sydney — but it takes a while.

In my first three months at the Tote auditions were held by myself and my associate directors, for more than 200 artists (including to which auditions are held for most roles in every play scheduled and open auditions — aimed specifically at the young and the newcomer to the profession — are held at least once a year).

I know of no theatre in the world in which opportunity to be seen is quite so open — despite the limitations of time and human endurance.

One of these early auditions at which I asked artists to read with this rhythm and accent of their roles, some a crop of different but mostly

apocryphal stories — like the actress who, when I asked her why Lady Windermere had a remarkably heavy Australian accent, is supposed to have replied: "But Mr. Redmond I am Australian." I wish it had happened a week before I arrived a long day.

And to the auditions must be added auditions (often spent) in other theatres watching other plays. After a long day's rehearsal or administrative work, five, six and even seven nights a week (often up with theatre going isn't everyone's idea of Paradise — a very often not a nice other — but over the past two years either I or some other representative of the Tote has been present at a performance of most plays done in Sydney).

In this way the work of the other theatres, actors, directors and playwrights is constantly seen by Tote staff.

In a city in which work opportunities were already severely limited, I felt it wrong to form a permanent company. It was then, and still is, my belief that the Tote should keep its doors open to as many and varied artists as possible. Talent and reliability should be the only considerations.

This is a great help to visiting directors who then have a much wider choice of artists. It has also been my responsibility to allow a director complete freedom of choice. Here the artist who has to create the play and should know with whom he can best do it — I may have sometimes tried a little persuasion, but never coercion.

It is common practice in London and New York for actors of any degree of attainment to

attend basic and rehearsal classes. For example London's R.A.D.A. runs two different courses three times a year and this quite usual for actors to attend every session throughout the year.

Though it may mean the tough discipline of covering the same ground over and over again, this constant return to basics — especially in voice work — is absolutely essential.

For this reason I instituted the Tote's free classes for professional actors. Open to all members of the profession, and at first viewed with considerable suspicion, the dedication of the tutors, Peggy Watson, Doreen Heneghan and the late Lou Lupton, soon made them immediately successful.

That they are at the moment in abeyance is a great loss to the Sydney theatre scene.

Working with Australian actors has been one of the great delights of my homecoming. Their eagerness and openness for hard work, their thirst for knowledge, their desire to act and themselves have impressed me greatly.

They were determined to be made of them, they demanded direction and when given it they find rich untapped reserves upon which to draw.

Some memorable moments on that theme — Peter Sumner and Judy Morris in a grueling stretching as they strive to outstep the immorally difficult characters of Abigail and Hecuba. Gwen Plumb's unforgettable Mrs. Swick, Anne Haddy's briefly difficult, but moving, Cleopatra in *The Great Art*, Ralph Corbett and Helen Hewitt in a number of quietest and all five of the splendid cast of *Wodehouse*.

None the first play I directed for the Tote is a corollary to one of the fondest memories of my career. A mass of monosyllables, single sentences, extraordinary moods and immensely difficult rhythm, I presented the toughest of challenges to an art.

It also introduced the incredible Pat Evans to me as an actor in a superb and full character played a piece of heaven as can be sensuously loved. A very happy time.

Incidentally I wonder how the Royal Dramatic Company Act apply to plays in certain quarters it seems to be a criminal act to be a British or American play. Just now *Madame Corneille* and *Chances* Engaged have been played in the double for reasons of being both British and successful.

Happily there are other ways in the matter. Recently I talked to a prominent Australian playwright on his second visit to *Chances* Engaged. He did come to study the exceptional

brilliance of the writing and the fine performances. And he promised himself two more years.

There can't be much wrong with that attitude nor with that of two other well known playwrights who told me the magnificence of *Of Thee I Sing* because *There* had revolutionised their thinking about their own work.

One of the more pleasant aspects of this job has been my happy association with the other major Sydney theatres, particularly the Malthus and I was delighted when Richard Williams consented to direct *Sweeney* for us. Pressure of his commitments has delayed us, John Bell but I believe this will be completed early in 1971.

A free exchange of ideas and scripts has existed between the Tate and the other Sydney theatres during my term. There have been times when a closer association seemed desirable and often possible but there are many practical difficulties to be overcome.

Coming to the Tate, as I did, at a time of world-wide financial difficulty, many of the things which I believed were the necessary — and still are — remain undone.

The formation of a studio theatre was the most serious casualty — a theatre in which new plays could be workshoped, where young actors and young directors could try the impossible and get away with it where plays beyond the limits of their time could be seen.

And the importation of experts from Europe and America to teach — not just to design a play, or light a play, or paint a set — our own people is an desperate need that I attempted to do this I was thwarted by lack of money and almost total apathy.

That suggests how the Australia Council couldn't find the money to bring out of



Pat Eissen and Ruth Gredwell in the Old Tate's production of *Home* (1975). Photograph, Brian Morris



Jilly Morris (Morphy) and Peter Summer (Abelard) in the Old Tate's production of *Abelard and Heloise*. Photograph, Old Tate

Brown's last lighting designers for a year to Australia. To quote from the application —

— In the twelve month period, approximately 18 professionally employed technicians together with 28 second and third year R.D.A. production and design course students, would participate in the training. This would be followed up by the design being used for at least one direct translation with a concern in each case to design and light one production in accordance with the programme within the confines of the company's own theatre with its own relevant problems.

Total Cost \$23,000.

But it was wrong to find a slightly less anxious to bring together a number of people to replace a Chris Wood.

I wonder on anyone — even those who received it — remember that it took place.

I held the liberal view that the Australia Council exists to serve the Arts on which principle I would have requested that someone from somewhere within its sacred walls would have approached me to know what artistic ideas I held and what I felt were the artistic needs of the Old Tate.

I have never met anyone from the Council in an official context. Of course I've bumped into them at many a pointless social parties and Dr. Murray once murmured something about our being lunch.

That was well over a year ago.

I trust Dr. Bitterbrey never received messages from the five telephone calls I made to confirm our luncheon.

Because I've still awaiting the courtesy of a returned call.

hands and clattered onto the stage to save her from a brief trip in the snow, a circular saw laid in a furnace throwing the victims pleasure. These worse than death.

Perhaps the most memorable audience comprised of members of the crew and officers of the Israeli aircraft carrier H.M.S. Harar. They came dressing for the occasion, wearing vicereine wing collars and cravats, waistcoats, fob watches and monocles! They were a marvellously appreciative audience and filled the entire orchestra, upon the entrance of the character Jerry, one of the crew rose to their feet and sang the whole of *Rule Britannia* and projected a toast to the actress's entrance, then continued to participate throughout the show at the mariner ball. Afterwards, the whole cast and crew were invited on board the ship for a party which lasted until dawn. One of the props for the show, a stuffed kakarua holds pride of place in the mess as a souvenir of that evening.

It is perhaps the broadly based appeal of the show and the atmosphere of the building which has contributed to its success. Customers have come from all over the world, all nationalities and ages. Ambassadors, parliamentarians, trade unions, socialists, school children, every walk of life. Arthur Rubinstein, Jerry Adams, Jimmy Edwards, as well as our own Winifred Aislett and Sir Robert Helpmann — indeed Jacques Tati arrived with intention of staying for only the first act, being under strict instructions from his doctor to return to his hotel thereafter to be suffering a heart attack and he had committed the following day to travel after two in the morning. Perhaps he decided to take his leave after collaborating with the cast and crew. One high official in the Canadian Trade Commission, who had been responsible for supplying us with necessary research material for *Lepidus in Dungen*, a melodrama based on the Klondike Gold Rush, felt compelled to bring all visiting officials and guests from Canada who were enjoying a stay in Sydney. In all, to save the play over twenty times and leave the play and the lives of the actors almost as well as they did. Business organisations have booked the entire theatre to entertain their clients and staff in one night's evening of fun.

Perhaps the closest link melodrama has with the past lies in the Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedies. One has only to consider *Arden of Feversham*, *Tam O'Shanter*, *The Jew of Malta*, *Macbeth* and many others, to find plays that are coloured with violence, distressed heroines and domestic agonies.

The style and presentation of the Music Hall's melodrama rely strongly upon the energy and commitment of dedicated actors. Throughout the years many of Australia's finest actor designers, choreographers and musicians have worked at the music hall. Malcolm Brown, Ben Maddick, John Unsworth, Barry Lavett, Alfred Sander, Neve Carr Glyn and Tom Loughran to mention only a few. It has also long been considered one of the most difficult and rewarding of training grounds for young actors. Many who made their first appearances on the music hall stage have already made a significant impression in the Australian theatre.

Learning to believe in an atmosphere where distractions can easily be found and the audience far from being a request, all the skills and training of the best professional actors. Training, presence, clarity of work and diction, economy, social protection and their unwavering and artistic use of props and

importance. Top classes are held weekly and singing and music when required if an uncommitted actor, or one deficient in the basic acting techniques loses the attention of the audience it will not be regained until it is wrested from them by a more dedicated and skilful performer.

My own personal association began in 1966. After passing the building many times I had decided it was probably one of the theatres in Sydney in which I would never find work because my own career had been more orientated in the less temperate and idealistic theatre. However, I was plunged into the world of modern melodrama as the leading hero. After a period of two years and four plays I returned to the legitimate stage having learnt to expect a flow of society with various rushing to serve food and drink during my performances. I soon learnt the only way to gain attention at the Music Hall was to command it, and once having got it, never let it get away. Dealing with a fractious audience who maybe arrived discontented with the work, determined not to enjoy themselves and then at the end of the evening stamping their feet clamouring for more and refusing to leave is an exhilarating experience.

My return in 1970 as the director and writer of the show was after the Music Hall departed briefly from its traditional thrust formula to present a roaring twenties musical show which, although most interesting, persuaded George Miller to revive his original opening production of *Four Lyons* and I was asked to direct. As it was the forty-seventh year of Captain Cook's landing at Barrall in 1770 seemed more appropriate for me to stage a completely original Australian melodrama incorporating the past of Sydney with a present theme centred on the Underworld and corruption in Sydney of that time. Many of the characters in the script were recognisable to the audience as their contemporary counterparts.

It was agreed this should be my opening production in the new capacity. Understood to write, cast, produce, direct and establish a backstage organisation from stage to stage director in less than two months.

Burning the midnight oil and working within the building almost to the complete exclusion of the world outside, mental opening was only just possible. The result was a success and broke all box office attendance records.



George F. Miller

Subsequently, each successive show has set new levels of attendance until the Spectre of Wycombe Manor (which was the last show) to complete its run at the Music Hall enjoyed a run of almost two years and was seen by over 180,000 people.

Without even being any of the original charm of the building at its opening in 1884, George Miller has continuously improved his facilities in every department. Pouring profits back in order to upgrade and be in a position to compete and survive in what has become an increasingly difficult type of enterprise, knowing full well that what was successful in the 1940s will not necessarily be good enough for today. He has enhanced the acting area, built new dressing rooms, installed a revolving stage, lighting systems and the latest in sound equipment. All this at a time when other theatrical ventures were losing ground.

The Music Hall is now regarded as an important institution in the Australian theatrical scene, achieving both prestige and critical acclaim for its style and presentation along with its ever increasing popularity.

As to the future? I hope the world of melodrama with its violence, emotional agony, physical disasters, shrieking, stonking drawings, crashes, configurations, tortured heroines, persecuted heroes and obviously villain, which is only the prelude to happiness and the triumph of virtue, continues to survive and thrive in the atmosphere created for it in the Music Hall.



Mr Alfred Sander (William Shakespeare), Miss Angela Howard (Lady Amelia Wycombe) and Mr Bert Rolfe (Dr. Randolph Strother) in *The Spectre of Wycombe Manor*. Photograph: David Cunningham

Film, Television and Radio



PURE SHIT AND NON-PROFESSIONAL

Bert Doling in interview with Phil Noyce

ALAN DOLING is a film maker who has been taught that one believes — about control, editing, the arrangement of scenes and editing, camera work, but progressed into a realm of the film making process with the occasional feeling of being a little out of control. He has been making a name for himself in the world of film making, and is now a well known figure in the industry. He is a man who has been making a name for himself in the industry, and is now a well known figure in the industry.

P N: Bert, the men professionals in your last film, *Pure Shit*, who were they and how did you work with them?

B D: Well, we only had about two or three people who were professionals. The main one was Max Gillies, the main factory worker who's done quite a few films. He's only got a very small part in this one. The bulk of the film was made up of the shoulders of people who had not acted in films before and in most cases had not acted anywhere before.

We had four main actors. One was a woman, Rose, the main character. She's been involved in drugs, the subject of the film. She was in it because she was an actress and she played the woman who was just getting into the scene, experiencing all the first time. The other three people had all been intimately involved in drugs at some time or other, and their involvement varied from, in one case, having been a police officer years ago and having stopped, to one who was in fact established as a drug user. The third person was just beginning to get into the regular use

of drugs and while since become somewhat more polished.

P N: What made you cast these three?

B D: It was a film about drugs and it was a film originally set up as a film about drugs, a therapeutic project for the Bursary Foundation — a drug rehab centre in Melbourne. There were a lot of people there who were involved with drugs who decided for one reason or another that they'd stop. So this was going to be a small project, an Experimental Film Fund Project, for people who made the same attempt to stop and were trying to come up with something that could be shown to other people that actually showed their experience —

P N: Detective?

B D: Yes, well, say 80% of the people involved in the film were people who'd begun to question their involvement in drugs. But in answer to your question, why use these people rather than anyone else, it's partly an economic reason. I mean the sort of thing I've been making haven't allowed for payment of anybody previously and the wage on that film was \$500 per week for the duration of shooting.

P N: For each actor?

B D: For the four main actors. Nobody else was paid. But the main reason for using these people was that we were attempting to draw on their experience and to make a film that talked in the same way to that experience that meant getting them involved much earlier than traditionally. The people who were using

in their film were also the people who wrote the script.

P N: How did you come to write the script and what do you mean getting them involved more than traditionally?

B D: How the film started was that a notice was put on the board at the Bursary Foundation which simply said anybody interested in making a film come along to this meeting. At that meeting I was the only film making person and the rest of the people had had no involvement with films at all. And from that group evolved a script.

P N: How long was it before you started shooting?

B D: Six months.

P N: You spoke to them about their problems?

B D: Well in many cases we'd already been friends and I've spoken to we were friends fairly readily so it wasn't about one film-maker going in and talking to a group of people who have problems other than his own. I mean in lots of ways, I've been fairly close to the drug scene myself over the years. It wasn't the traditional film making situation where you go in and ask them you desperately try to get a bit of local colour to put on top of the form of your film as it looks like it might be realistic — there was no preconceived form, there was no preconceived story for the film. We ran three times a week and we talked and there'd be anecdotes come up about their personal experience and things. I'd make notes and I'd go away and I'd write up a rough draft of that and I'd bring that back and

that would be executed, and gradually the thing

P.N. When did the idea to make it into a dramatic structure that it got now —

B.D. Always.

P.N. It was always going to be a narrative film?

B.D. Yes. But it was going to be an experimental film — as in an OFF-film — but I was in it that I couldn't make the film for the budget. We were told we had to go up to the Development Fund and as we did that. The longer the process continued of the funding the more we worked on the script and as the more it evolved. Finally we got the money together and three weeks before we began shooting we began rehearsing on the script we had worked up.

We had a full multi-camera system, a video tape system and two cameras and we ran a lot of the stuff.

P.N. What did you do with the two cameras?

B.D. Oh, everybody would take turns. The idea about it wasn't to reproduce the editing that the film would have. It was primarily to give people a sense of confidence. And that has been my experience about using non-professional actors. If you get into a situation where they've walked on the set and they know why things are in and why things are not in, they have a much greater sense of understanding what they're doing when they're out there — so that's the first part of the process of getting a reasonable performance from someone who hasn't acted before. Then the second part of it is giving them a confidence about their body language — the actual physical thing they're doing. That's where the magic came in and it was extremely useful because you could have a person stand there and do their number and then you'd play it back.

Because of the reification of the role situation where you've got the film maker and a lot of people who don't know what's going on, it's very important for them to get your approval so they're convinced they're not going to make a mess of the material when they finally get out

there. The idea was simply to get them to a situation where they felt absolutely confident about their own capacities. The script developing process and the viewing process were critical to that.

P.N. What would you do out together, actual scenes, or did you improvise?

B.D. We had the script by that stage — it needed to get out a lot in that process. There were four boxes that people would sit on and they'd be in the car, running the scene dialogue. If we were interested in one particular performer or another, we'd stay on close up on that person, and then run it back. We'd all ad lib to the moment, run through it, talk about it and then go back and do it again. By the time we'd done that and got onto the set, these people were in a position where they could be completely relaxed and therefore run a few takes. My experience is that if you don't do that sort of preparation when you get onto a set, a non-professional actor is able to give you perhaps a tenth of his ultimate potential because he's so unsure of what he's doing. Above all they're very unsure about their body language — they haven't seen it, and video simply gives them a confidence. In *Plane Six* you've got, in most cases, people playing roles which are, if not close to themselves, at least immediately rooted in their experience. So what you're attempting to get them to do is reproduce their experience in front of a camera. The thing you have to actually address yourself to is the attitude in that process.

P.N. If you were doing a film about something completely dissimilar to the actors' experience, do you still think that would be a good way of getting a naturalistic performance from a non-professional actor?

B.D. I wouldn't see a situation where you'd be involved in using non-professional actors who were doing stuff a long way from their experience. It's probably because of their experience that you choose to use them. But I think it's a process that can be used extensively and I think that the possibilities of introducing much closer representations of our day to day

life are very high in that situation. The camera has a major role in defining day-to-day reality for people which is being just ignored at the moment.

The process we went through in *Plane Six* was a very positive one on all levels because we had a good one. We had a group of extremely intelligent professionals and at the same time a group of non-professionals who were extremely well prepared. I think that's the key to it and it's a two-edged sword. What you're trying to do is make the process of the profession as non-frightening as you possibly can to people who are not used to it. But the other answer to the question is that drug addicts themselves are into playing out an extremely well developed fantasy life so that they're prone to accept for something like that.

P.N. What about that rapid-fire question and answer and comment? Was that your direction?

B.D. Yes. My experience is that film slows down dialogue amazingly. It might sound right in isolation but it sure doesn't sit down on the screen. They were talking at least twice as fast as they normally do — and the film has played that down a little bit. But it was extremely useful because while we were doing it, and that was one of the problems convincing people that in fact it wasn't essential to do that. We had a few other practical problems: some of the actors were using quite a lot of heroin and that tends to slow people down a lot so they felt they were talking very much like this, but in fact they were talking like that and no amount of cajoling could get them to talk any faster.

The structure of the movie was about the trends of the life, as both from past activity and contemporary engagements. There's this kind of existing method to some the dope and then what they're looking for is a catalyst, a still point of their life, so both the structure of the thing and the dialogue were pre-conceived that way.

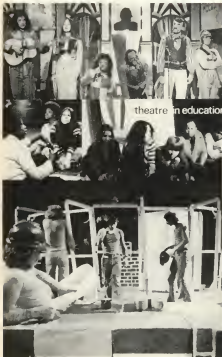
What is it they're actually looking for out of this dope?



Theatre-In - Education

RELEVANT THEATRE FOR CHILDREN

Roger Chapman



ROGER CHAPMAN is the recently reported director of youth activities South Australia Theatre Company. He was formerly General of Theatre in Education, British Theatre and General of Theatre in Education, South Australia.

My first tangle with the all-knowing Australian press was when at Adelaide (the *Advertiser*) after just having spent 30 hours on jet. I was told that as Theatre in Education was the study of texts in classrooms could I explain what texts I would be using. It was difficult to take this seriously, but in reality, most people's conception of Theatre in Education is not too far removed from this. In that it indicates reports of actors performing plays from scripts (often specially written scripts) for audiences of children.

3 groups of actors have in fact been touring schools in England with productions of one kind or another since the thirties. They tended to be phoney, and usually those that related to the current examination syllabus. Such events achieved notoriety of one kind or another, depending on the people involved — one remembers stories such as that of that time old ladies in a taxi who performed *Macbeth* playing all the parts between them. — "Don't tell the children we are all women — that I never knew."

This kind of nonsense was tackled in the early fifties by people like Brian Way, who realised that theatre in schools for children could be more than playing to a captive audience by a group of out-of-work actors. Brian Way employed groups of actors who wanted to work with children, and devised special scripts which not only tried to avoid the more traditional parameters of *Peter Pan* elements, but also included suitable opportunities for the audience to participate in an active fashion, in a rather more sophisticated way than simply looking on. The whole experience, for instance, might be involved in reaching the circus tent or creating a rave. The categories released

during the school holidays, and spend the term in time on a kind of whistle stop tour through various local education authorities. General performances each day coupled with the demands of such performances usually resulted in a rapid turnover of actors. Schools were visited once, plays were directed in our various age ranges, and were offered as a prototype. These were intended to either let the local authority paying the fee that the company demanded, or more usually, to let the harassed teacher needed to collect cash from the students.

This kind of activity still continues, the fundamental elements being that the company works to a script or plan that is provided for them, and they visit the schools once only in other words a repetitive system of a fairly traditional kind designed to provide occasional theatrical experience for children.

There have, however, been other developments. The advent of the new regional theatres presented a different kind of opportunity for educational companies to be based on such theatres. The first of these was at the Belgrade. Coventry the major change in the concept was that a small company based on a theatre such as the Belgrade, could provide a much more comprehensive service to a local community than could the one off visits of touring companies. The aims of local community service with and for young people was the driving force behind the Belgrade company and the term Theatre in Education seems immediately linked with the formation of this particular company.

Based itself on the first Belgrade Theatre in Leicester, Team and within a year it became evident that a Theatre style and type of work to that which had previously been seen in schools or in the parent theatre was beginning to emerge.

"The professional actor's role previously had been to find 'good work', where he could and then be told by a manager what plays he would be performing in, what role he would be playing in the in relation many cases how to play it. Our brief was to provide an 'operational service' — there were no scripts no text books only a highly original existence of young people who by and large regarded the theatre as irrelevant to their everyday lives. It was the same reason that was to be the cornerstone of the last successful company policies. The work which was to be written, devised and performed by the same group of people working in inextricable tied to deal with the needs and problems which were of interest to them and were important to actor and audience alike.

After just a few years the reputation of this type of work were beginning to be felt inside the profession. Few companies based on the Belgrade had just were beginning to not the time staffed by the accountant and best represented the intent of Equity but later and more mature hands who were intrigued by the relationship between drama and education and equally by performing itself motivated and self-reliant work. Come 1970 in Leeds we were a group of eight which had attracted leading regional and national performers who for the first time were enjoying the freedom and privilege of working this way.

Theatre in Education had taken a clear lead in Equity affairs, negotiating the first theatre contract whose conditions were to break through the old status quo in which the Equity Standard Contract. Work was spilling over from the schools into the wider house and young people were making increasing demands on theatres for a more flexible

responsive and locally rooted types of presentation rather than museum classical or faded West End comedies. Today colleges of education, universities and even England's out-dated drama schools are raising Theatre in Education courses. Eric Metzenberg when slowly and publishing the best seats from the companies and obligation to work in Theatre in Education is in many cases much better than at a regional theatre.

Australia today therefore feels like those heavily mid-sixty years in England when everyone was frantically building new theatres and starting new companies without pausing to ask the question who or what for. I hope Australia doesn't have to go through the English mid-sixties' glitch and simply create an audience base and then once much needed buildings obviously look like almost cultural museums no.

While main stream theatre may be heading toward adolescence Theatre in Education in Australia is going through both pains and stages of adolescence involved are just beginning to come to grips with the problems.

Working in South Australia the school population of the State is similar to that of Greater Leeds. How do we get to everyone? How do we negotiate the work which is already in existence? How successfully does Theatre in Education team itself into a movement with an energy and desire of its own? How can we raise the prestige standard and consciousness of the work to the theatres will replace the work outside the buildings with equal importance to the work done in the main house.

The reputation of these problems will only come about if Theatre and Theatre in Education companies inside them jointly. It is as if a theatre having a Theatre in Education company unless doing an integral part of that theatre's policy. Equally it is no use a Theatre in Education company spending its time and energy attending to parent companies in the use of theatrical skills. These must be coming together of both areas and a clear understanding of what we are trying to achieve. That way there is a strong possibility of a relevant theatre both inside the building and in the community.

1984



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Amateur

FESTIVAL OF AUSTRALIAN STUDENT THEATRE 1978

Jane Schiller

The Festival of Australian Student Theatre was held at Melbourne University this year from August 18th to the 29th. Victorian and interstate students gathered for two weeks of performance, workshop and seminar activity — and also recreation.

Festivals of student theatre have been held in Australia for some years — Melbourne University hosted Thursphere in 1972, but the F.A.S.T. name was first used last year in Sydney. It was at the Sydney Festival that some Melbourne students volunteered to host this year's Festival, and from the day they started in Melbourne the planning began. Simon Pryor, a Drama student from Melbourne State College, was appointed director, a position which was unpaid and at least from Jane onwards full-time.

The organisational problems were many, and varied from finding accommodation for interstate delegates to the blood out-of-a-stone task of finding sponsors. Private sponsors were sought — and not found so the organisers were forced to rely on a grant from the Australia Council, a grant from the University Interim Committee for the Performing Arts, and the generosity of the Melbourne University Union Board, plus the £30 000 fee paid by each delegate. Accommodation was an equally large problem. It had to be close to the working area of the Festival, acceptable to the Health Department

and above all, as inexpensive as possible. The problem was eventually solved by hiring garages and placing them on car parks on the University campus. This was positively luxurious compared to accommodation at previous festivals but got a slash in the already stretched finances of the Festival. Possible tutors were approached by David Kendall, Director of University Theatre, and a workshop programme was prepared. Student groups sent details of productions they hoped to bring to F.A.S.T., and Tony Clarke of the Education Department Drama Resource Centre set about the unenviable task of finding theatre spaces, which would be suitable to each group, and were within walking distance of the campus. Eventually three University theatres were used, the Quid, the Union and the Prince Philip, and these were supplemented by the large old Back Theatre of the Print Factory, the Drama Resource Centre, the Wilf Reid Theatre and La Mama.

Publicity was another area that had to be tackled. Letters were sent to every tertiary campus in Australia and an advance party was sent to some of the larger Universities and Colleges. The major problem was lack of specific contacts in many institutions, so some groups remained uncontacted.

The last few days before the festival were hectic, cars were towed into the University, food was bought, and final details

of workshop and performance programmes were worked out.

The number of interstate and Victorian delegates was disappointing — only 130 delegates finally attended the Festival. One reason for this attendance which was far less than hoped for, was the fact that non-affiliated institutions had their holidays at the same time. Many people would only have been able to stand the Festival for one of the two weeks, and decided this was not worth the costs and effort involved in travelling down to Melbourne. Large numbers of delegates came from Queensland even despite the travelling involved, and were among the most active groups at the Festival.

The most exciting aspect of the productions and workshops at the Festival was their variety. From Monash University's *A Speech of Revenge*, an Australian musical semiotics to Melbourne's *Two men show camped from the writings of Strindberg, Dostoevsky and the Queensland group who presented it through a new interpretation of Macbeth* presented by a Melbourne group. Theatre Experiments' productions were varied and generally at a high standard. Two plays by Samuel Beckett were presented. *Endgame* by Monash Theatre, and *Words and Deeds* by Rusden State College. Drama students from Rusden who have made Brecht their special mode this year, performed *Goodnight and Goodmorn* and the *Three Mothers*, and ran workshops on Brecht's work to complement their performances. Rusden was among the more active groups at the Festival also presenting *One Offshore*, a group devised experiment in identity, and *Passion* by Edward Bond. Sydney University Dramatic Society presented Bond's *The Sea*, a picture of the disintegration of society in an English coastal village in 1960, and also a highly polished production of *Sam Sheppard's A Jury*. Drama students and staff from Melbourne State College presented a production of *Marie/Sade* directed by Lindy Davies and other drama students from the college performed two group devised works, *By the Light of The Solway Firth* a study in isolation, and also a workshop performance on the theme of individuality.

Geelong Theatre, a newly formed Melbourne student group performed Dostoevsky's black comedy *Ray Shchukin* at La Mama, where Griffith University later nonplussed audiences with their production of *Diogenes and Socrates*, which a Queensland critic had described as 'the most inspiring play — I play it can be called — I have never seen LaTrobe University presented a double bill, an entertaining new Australian play in *Open* left by



Griffith University a production of *Barabas*



Griffith University's production of *Spider Rocks*

Jorge Diaz

Much Fun (everything you get you pay for) was presented in the Back Theatre of the Frim Factory and played to large and appreciative audiences. This was one of several shows presented at P.A.S.T. by the Regular Theatre Troupe from Queensland, who also appeared at last year's Festival in Sydney. *Followed* *Alone a Zoo Story* a study of the fears and agony of human isolation was presented by Humeilton State College in the Prince Philip Theatre, and audiences who returned to sit through a few days later were treated to one of the highlights of the Festival a production of *Lay By* by the Old Nick Company from Tasmania.

Lay By was written by a number of young British playwrights including Howard Brenton and Cressa Wilson. It was variously described by British critics as "a breakthrough in modern theatre" and "improvising rehearsal". A pioneering portrayal of attitudes to rape in our society. Old Nick a production was expert and not frivolous or self-conscious as it could have so easily become. It was a great joy to the majority of the Melbourne theatre-going public chosen to demand P.A.S.T. performances although they were adequately advertised in the daily press. For producers *Lay By* and the equally excellent *Melbourne University*

productions of *Low Road* by Danish Brooks and *The Cover* by Harold Pinter. (We not often seen here)

Workshops also covered a wide range — from tap dancing to make up classes. Allan Hunt from Brunel University came out from England to run workshops in Theatre in Education. The Australian Performing Group taught delegates some of the scrupulous skills used in their Community Theatre Shows and Alison Rickard from the A.P.G. ran workshops based on the poetry of Sylvia Plath and Gertrude Stein. Margaret Lancia from the Modern Dance Ensemble took members around every morning and delegates could follow these with Mary White voice classes based on the work of Rosamund Bates and designed to make the best and most rational use of the actor's vocal resources. Louise Smith from the A.P.G. and a group of delegates to workshops at Peter Hendrie's *Dealing for Help* and presented a to other interested delegates. Jack Hibbard was available to discuss new scripts written by delegates. Bruce Kerr from Melbourne took workshops persons on contemporary commedia dell'arte characters and situations and Charles Kemp led classes on abstract playwriting, discussing the special skills and techniques needed to set the plays of Beckett, Ibsen and others. Delegates used the facilities of studios in the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music to create their own music under the guidance of Boris Cunningham and Paul Turner. David Lander from Melbourne State College worked on improvisation towards a particular theme. Mythology and culture in theatre were the themes of workshops run by Alan Burrows from Griffith University. David Kendall took workshops classes in movement psychology the vocabulary of actions, working actions and costumes based on the work of Rudolf Laban. Delegates generally found workshops stimulating and well-balanced with new groups with new ideas and skills.

A series of seminars on the state of student theatre in Australia were held throughout the Festival where delegates described the problems of their own groups and how they were attempting to solve them. Among the subjects discussed were those of the role of student theatre in tertiary institutions and in society, generally the funding of student theatre, covering the effect of the growing number of formal drama courses at universities and colleges on student groups and the boom/bust phenomenon evident in the activity of most student theatre groups. These seminars were chaired by Bruce Kempfert, Dr John McDonald of Monash University and David Kendall. The variety of experiences of groups meant that seminars were extremely interesting to all who attended. Delegates from Rensselaer University Student Theatre who ran their society on a 4000-00 yearly budget were invited to take members of the University Dramatic Society from Perth. Initially discussing their 444,000-00 annual turnover and a budget for one production of close to 810,000-00. One aspect of production that was obviously important to all delegates was the availability of theatre space. Some groups had space reserved for them rent free, or a rehearsal space, while others were faced with bills of up to 400-00 an hour for a theatre with seating capacity of only 200. The general feeling of delegates was that an available and inexpensive space, suited both to the requirements of the group and their expected

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exhibition was essential for lively student theatre in our place. Another point stressed was the continual need to train new members in all aspects of production, so that a group does not continually rely on the same people and thus become stale, or fall apart when these active members leave. Formal drama courses were discussed at length and the feeling of most delegates was that these could have a positive effect on student theatre activity, if a working relationship between the two groups was well established in the future.

The recreational aspect of the Festival was extremely successful. The A.P.G. Community Theatre Troupe and Captain Matchbox gave a concert on the opening night which was very entertaining, and Melbourne's folk singer Danny Spenser entertained delegates for an evening. Most important activities were unplanned however. Out-delegates entertained themselves in the way that only a group of about 200 university students can.

Despite funding problems and a relatively poor attendance the Festival was on the whole a success with many excellent productions stimulating workshops and the interchange of ideas that is the essential part of any Festival of this nature. So now we can only spread the word and skills learned at the Festival and hope that financial difficulties do not hinder the organisation of P.A.S.T. '89, which will be held in Perth.

International

THE POLISH SCENE

A PERIOD OF OVERSTRAIN

Bogdan Gieraczynski

BOGDAN GIERACZYŃSKI is a well known and respected Polish theatre journalist. As one of the people from the East who has done a lot of his production work recently (mostly an absolute rarity: August Górecki, Górecki's leading actor here he conveyed the last six months of Polish theatre

In the first half of 1979 Poland recorded but a few notable stage productions. But it is only natural that any country, though of rich theatrical traditions has its periods of overstrain. Two events, however, went far beyond the average and can be singled amongst the best for their originality and poetic force.



Teneta, Wrocław

Photograph: Jan Borkowski

Two years ago Stanisław Bruś was appointed as artistic director to Teneta Województwa in Wrocław. He is an outstanding director, reputable critic, and author of some notable books on world theatre. Having gained considerable recognition for his production of *Świat Aferyści* (World Affairage) by Polish playwright Mieczysław Forecki (produced in Wrocław in 1975 and in the U.S.A. at the beginning of 1976), Bruś in 1976 staged *Amor Lento* by Mieczysław Gieraczynski, the well-known Polish expert on, and translator of, James Joyce. The play was based on Joyce's biography and particularly on *Ulysses*, Forecki's work, and some of his poems (the title and the protagonist's name was taken from Forecki's *Mała*).

Bruś's production, edited by Zdzisław Cybulski, one of Gieraczynski's actors, was undoubtedly a first class product of this time in Poland. I would not hesitate to reckon it as the best within a few recent years in this country. Were I also to say briefly what had mainly contributed to that success, I would primarily mention the text by Gieraczynski and the stage creation of Teneta Śewicka who played the protagonist. Text must always remain the basis of theatricalisation, but in the case of *Amor Lento* it was more open to interpretation, not attempting to impose the vision of the characters on the part the author thus left them free to complete its development through their work. The director could not have chosen better than to trust Teneta Śewicka with the lead Śewicka, an actress of extraordinary appearance and temperament, filled it with the genuine power of her own knowledge and experience and brought out the veridical truth about women. Her character appeared the symbol of Great Life, Great Love, Great Women. Śewicka's identification with *Amor Lento* became total and veridical so that the viewer entered into the spirit of the play to the point of being made intellectually and emotionally to share the truth and thoughts of the protagonist.

Another outstanding production of that period was *Światowa droga nocy* (Night roadmap) by Antoni Łajtocha (Vojtyła) produced in Teneta Wsch. Wrocław. The play was directed by Andrzej Wajda, one of the most reputable film directors in Poland. The course of Wajtyła's play was the biography and the legends connected with the great Polish painter, a Romanticist, Józef Pogoński, presented in that of the dark days of the Liberalist dictatorship, the period of contempt and power abuse. Its theme is an enduring motivation for artists' protest against society, contains all the artist's many problems of epoch, human, cosmic. The figure of the painter was played by an experienced actor of the Polish stage, Tadeusz Łomkowski.

Światowa droga nocy and *Amor Lento*, though different in theme, have some qualities in common. They both deal with the philosophical human existence, the truth of changing values and ideas. They were both produced with the utmost zeal and mastery which resulted in great strength of appeal to the viewers' intellect and emotions. That is why I consider them the most interesting products of the first half of 1979.

That the performances mentioned above are rated 'the best' may provoke enquiry as to why no other contemporary play has reached that standard.

It is a frequently used remark, both by professionals and the public, that the Polish contemporary drama has arrived at the point of decline and consequently there is declining too. This fact seems to prove — at least now

and in this country — what Grotowski once said on this matter. Theatre becomes an *ephemeral art*, people give it less and less attention and, though it gives out masterpiece it dwells in *maré*.

For quite a time recently outstanding plays have appeared in Poland. And of these have been any that might approach that level they were not actually topped. They did not depict in a visible way the present day condition of the Polish people (as of the present-day world) in a drama of abstraction. Theaters, therefore, partly classical or "contemporary drama" — the latter sometimes applying to *Wzrost Gombrowicza* or *Stanislaw i Wolność*. And the police is not as tight as at first glance, an excuse to the contemporary playwrights. It is a mass necessary that must be observed to prevent the spread of *sublimity*.

To illustrate this statement, generally it is, one might examine the up more of the annual festival of the Polish contemporary drama held in Wrocław. This year none of the five plays presented reached any appreciable recognition. Another example: the plays by *Unkowno*, *Rymowice* and *Wrocław* produced this year in Kraków which has traditionally been the place of high achievement in the field, gained the opinion of being true. These two examples may be a meaningful example of our contemporary drama.

Two highly appreciated authors of exceptionally good and original plays: *Tadeusz Różewicz* and *Stanisław Mrożek*, are not, although at their best, able to suggest the demands of over one hundred theaters in Poland, and the result is that most Polish

theaters present these plays simultaneously.

Despite all these complaints about drama in general both on the part of the public and the critics, it would be naive to say that theatre as a place of average art production, remains in constant tension and misunderstanding. On the contrary, what is typical of this medium is its possibility of being able to transform a poor text into an interesting performance. And this is not so very rare, some performances in the first half of 1978, although far from inspiring were not without value.

As an example one might mention *Teatr Nowy* (New Theatre) with its *Gladius* (*Phaedra*) by Mrożek, originally and skillfully directed by *Kazimierz Dejmek*. The same play was produced in *Teatr Stary* (Old Theatre), Kraków to much poorer effect, directed by *Jerry Jacob*. To compensate for this failure *Teatr Stary* presented *Myślenie* (*Thinking*) by *Stanisław Wajkowski*, directed by the late *Kenneth Szwedko*, one of the most talented directors of the recent years in Poland (*Szwedko* died in 1975 in an air crash). To close this brief review of those neither good nor bad productions I will also mention *Mołoch* prepared by *Adam Hanuszkiewicz* in *Teatr Narodowy* (National Theatre) in Warsaw. It is a sort of reminiscence of a great Polish Romantic poet, *Adam Mickiewicz*.

Through this sketchy and incomplete survey of the Polish dramatic output of the first half of 1978 I only wish to set out the contemporary and possibly realistic view of it, refraining from complaints as well as from undesired comparisons. And if the reader finds that the Polish theatre is in a temporary recession, he will probably be right.



Empress Filomena Monagaria by Frank Wiseland



AUSTRALIAN CENTRE - INTERNATIONAL THEATRE INSTITUTE

The International Theatre Institute would like to announce that it is publishing a booklet entitled *A Short Guide For the Australian Theatre*. The first letter from their office requesting basic information from the various theatres around Australia was sent in May 8, as yet any theatre has not found time to answer the request (we will be most grateful to hear from them when the mail). Obviously the booklet, being sent on the basis of the past year's listing of each theatre (including subsidy, reported and future plans) needs to be presented tomorrow within the limits permitted by the yearly re-evaluation of funding and the fulfilment of projected plans to make it viable. Consequently information not gathered by the end of September must mean inclusion in the first final book will be impossible and the staff finding themselves in the position should present the full details of their theatre for inclusion in the following copy next year.

11th WORLD FESTIVAL OF THEATRE The eleventh World Festival of Theatre will be held in **NANCY, FRANCE**, April 28 through May 8, 1977. Theatre groups and theatre specialists who wish to be considered as candidates for participation must submit applications to the Festival Office by **OCTOBER 30, 1976**. The application should include a detailed history of

the company, a description of the method of work, a scene-by-scene analysis of the production to be presented, a synopsis of the script action, four photographs of the production. Between December 31 & March 1, Festival Representatives will visit groups in their various countries to see their work. No group will receive a definite invitation before the visit has been reviewed by a delegate of the Festival. All travel expenses are to be paid by the invited companies. The expenses of the groups while they are in Nancy and the responsibility of the Festival since its founding over twelve years ago by Jack Lang and a team of students and artists. The Nancy Festival has presented 350 companies from 60 countries. In 1976, two hundred thousand spectators attended the performances.

For further information: **Michèle Robyns** (Festival Director), Bureau de Festival in Nancy, 108 rue de Metz, 54000 Nancy, France.

THEATRE OF NATIONS At the XV CONGRESS OF THE ITS MOSCOW, 1979, a new formula for the THEATRE OF NATIONS was adopted, whereby the International Season would be organized each year in a different country. Its program would include outstanding productions, revealing the main

tendencies in the evolution of the modern theatre. An agenda of symposia, laboratory and workshops will be developed. The search for new subjects and forms of scenic art was also projected. The first season of the Theatre of Nations was organized by the **FOURTH CENTRE OF ITS** and held in **WARSAW**, June 5-28, 1976. Here 18 companies from 16 countries offered 50 performances of 21 plays. The second season was planned by the **BELGRADE INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL (BITEF)** and took place in **BELGRADE, YUGOSLAVIA**, on September 10-30, 1976.

ITS U.S.A. Our thanks to festivals throughout the world for responding to our request for production schedules. This information has been of great value to theatre critics, spectators, and companies interested in attending party members. **HOW TO ASK FOR FOUR 1978** illustrated program/brochure to add to our clearing house of festival information. Our purpose is to spread knowledge about international festivals to build audiences to facilitate participation by touring companies.

Please send material to: **ITI** of the United States, Inc., 1850 Broadway, New York, New York 10023.

Technical

THE CHARACTER OF AUSTRALIAN TECHNOLOGY

Dennis Irving

DEARLY AVOIDED has been with Stuart. (Quoted from his very first in Melbourne and at the National General Manager. It is the past National Director of the Australian Engineering Society of Australia — a body concerned with the safety and lighting, heating and the theatre) and he is currently Vice President of the Australian of Theatre Technology (ATTC).

Used around 30 years or so back stage performances were on in theatres all over Australia with only the very basic equipment essential, generally made up by bits and pieces produced by the theatre, own staff or copied by the local engineering establishment from patterns in trade journals. This situation was altered by the practice of buying productions from overseas. My Fair Lady, for example, where the contract had specific reference to standards of set, costume, lighting and so on, which were impossible to achieve with poor quality equipment. More recently, the availability of mass air transport has made physically possible the acquisition of visits to Australia of whole companies like the Royal Shakespeare in New York City, New York, who expect to be able to walk into a theatre no more than 48 hours, or even 24 hours before a performance, which means that the technical standards must be equivalent with those home countries and the demands as competitive as possible. Hence theatres here are now making it clear it is necessary to incorporate advanced technical equipment at world standard. Although the cost is considerable, it is possible to balance these against the benefits obtained, both in terms of running costs and their flexibility of inter-continental touring. This situation is bound to strengthen as productions become more demanding whilst increased travel costs are more expensive and more difficult to find.

The use of the term "world standard" has its own difficulties, because theatre technology tends to vary in the three main geographical areas of design leadership. Each area has its own favoured techniques which by accident or design are not fully compatible with the others, the latest problem of this type being with audio equipment.

It may be of help to consider the present state of art in the three main sections of theatre technology, i.e. stage machinery, stage lighting and audio equipment.

Stage machinery has certainly the longest history, from Greek times to the present day and covers the whole gamut from hand-prop through curtain tracks on the one hand to the enormous structures which support modern stages in British and continental Europe, England,

and the still larger and more elaborate arrangements favoured in America which have the aim of making one stage auditorium suitable for use in a number of different guises. Mechanical props are irrelevant to this discussion but it is interesting to trace the development of scenery hanging equipment according to production styles and changes in technology. Around 40 years ago the majority of productions relied on flat lighting and flat scenery, the only third dimensional impressions being given by highly skilled scenery painters. The flat scenery was either pushed on from the wings or hung from a grid overhead, itself being supported by simple rope sets, then with steel bog weights and later with various types of counterweighting, each with differing degrees of cost and ease of operation. For the smaller theatres, good quality single purchase counterweighting will remain for many years, but the trend to larger and larger built pieces of scenery and the use of multiple wagons in conjunction with them means that we are faced with the twin problems of needing to carry greater weights, at the same time reducing the level of the counterweights in order to have free wing space. The engineers' immediate answer to this is to use double purchase thereby relieving the trend but doubling the weight. Anyone who has suffered the problems of a main gear in the Adriatic Festival Theatre will know that in terms of maintenance this has to be a poor solution although the cheaper. Currently work is progressing in a number of countries on the use of electric flying systems, the development of which was hindered until recently because of the technical difficulties of providing precise variable speed and positioning with equivalent range and accuracy to that obtained by experience with fly wire varying hand lines. This is now possible using DC or variable frequency systems, but the capital cost is large, partly due to control problems and partly because of the necessity to comply with safety regulations. Having built the hoisting devices, themselves, one is led to consideration of the control panels (parallelising the developments of lighting control systems) in terms of decisions on numbers of controls, complexity of presetting, monitoring and so on. In America a number of small theatres are being equipped with electric flying systems based on the use of single line hoists capable of being synchronised in various groups dependent on requirements. This technique is flexible, but again has high capital cost even in America where the safety regulations are lax in comparison with our own.

German large theatre technicians have less emphasis on scenery flying due to their extensive use of open gas productions with

large wing round cycloramas, so one sees a small number of large capacity winging units with equally large control desks and units of main isoperformance. There is greater emphasis on stage lifts and machines and the transport of large pieces of three dimensional scenery horizontally and vertically (down) to various storage positions. Certainly the capital cost of that kind of equipment is beyond the reach of the average Australian theatre, and there are some doubts as to its desirability in any case.

A brief mention must be made of multi-use auditoriums, which have been described by other authors as multi-purpose, multi-purpose. There are many examples in America of improved or academic buildings with suitable seating and premium arrangement seats enabling the seating capacity and volume to be altered for concert, opera, or drama operations and the protagonists of these buildings are convinced that their solution is correct. Equally the European and English attitude is much more traditional, but in some cases each devoted to one particular class of work and that is the trend which is now appearing in Australia in projects such as the Sydney Opera House, Adelaide Festival Theatre complex and others being planned in Melbourne and Brisbane.

A final, passing observation on stage machinery generally. It is in this area a much greater degree of self-sufficiency in Australia by theatre staff than in England — West End productions such as *Shogun*, *Men of La Mancha* etc. had expensive purpose built mechanical devices which were supplied as outside contracts by the traditional stage machinery companies. Here, such devices are usually built by the mechanical theatre staff, in a manner similar to University theatres in America, with the difference that these latter usually have large and extremely well equipped workshops which would be the envy of any of our local staff.

Stage lighting, although more recent because it had to await invention of a suitable light source, is the most advanced technical equipment for all forms of theatre, whether professional, semi-professional or otherwise, from the "standard" (intended in Vol 1 No 1 of this journal) to the biggest of grand opera. For a while it was difficult to see its role in production other than with some neutral variation in colour and intensity. Then designers realised the potential of directional intensity, colour, and shadow — their permanent requests for optical control of these parameters brought technical progress in luminaires ("luminaires" or instruments, dependent on where you were brought up, from simple open chandeliers to optical devices giving precise control of beam shape and size. These are typified by two lanterns which are virtually industry standards: that is the Strand Pattern 35 in 340-watt English speaking theatres and Strand Century 100 all-purpose lanterns in America and other 130-watt countries. Here an element of patriotism is demonstrated by the relative lack of acceptance of each of these devices in the other countries. Neither type has a German direct equivalent; German lighting tending to be by use of large areas of very soft lighting using high wattage elements of comparative simplicity, working in long throw. The Continental large cyclorama mentioned earlier also lends itself to the use of large area, low intensity fluorescent lighting equipment which is only satisfactory if placed a long way from the cloth, a requirement which is physically

impossible unless one hits the large stage common in Europe. The lighting of cycloramas from close range almost defeated theatre engineers, and salvation came from some developments intended for television studio work. An Italian unit makes possible uniform lighting of high cloths from close range — first tried in the Theatre we believe in Givenshousie, England, and very shortly after in the Adelaide Festival Theatre.

Television development also played a large part in the solution of the other side of the stage lighting problem, that of control of the light sources in limited intensity. Anyone who has read early French acting editions will know how lighting plots used to be in terms of three colours and white in simple mixes to achieve the desired results. Stage lighting designs employing hundreds of individual lanterns, each covering a particular red, white, particular colour, already required individual control of each source. Even when simplified by grouping lanterns when possible the operator can still be faced with several hundred variables each of which have to be set to the right level by objective decisions of the designer. The subsequent regulation and variation of these can be an engineering nightmare.

On small installations such as Darryl Wilson's *Alternative theatre*, it is still reasonable to use multiple individual controls, and too expensive to use extra electronic units. It is now common place, however, for systems of say 80 channels or more to use digital techniques for recording and re-calling of lighting combinations, which any recently graduated electronics engineer would tell you is a simple task. The rub comes in providing a system which enables the operator to keep pace with the variable whims and changes of producers and designers, the inevitable differences between each night's production and the others in the run, the necessity for stepping backwards and forwards, overruling, changing and so on. All lead to the development of very complex systems such as the Lightboard recently installed in the new National Theatre in London. This system was not developed by engineers and then sold — it was the direct result of a detailed performance specification produced by the consultants for the project, who are themselves practising lighting designers.

Again we have step differences in technology. The German theatre is used to a team of highly trained operators, whatever electronic aids they use they still expect to see a series of individual controls that move with every change, or lately the use of cleverly engineered individual meters and associated potentiometers which amount to the same thing. English technology has been moving to larger and larger numbers of elements such that the space required for one central per channel is too great, hence calculator reaching type key boards are used to address particular channels. The American prefer to minimise the number of dimmers and to group lanterns together either with a large permanent patching system or with a rig designed for a given production. Memory lighting control systems have only recently been accepted in Australia, but it is interesting to note that a most recent instalment, *At Close Range*, which is now setting a series of international touring productions, has, at the insistence of its lighting designer, Theron Mussen, Connecticut, requirement that a memory system shall always be used. Anyone who has seen the show, and the rapid series of complex lighting



Original production of Jesus Christ Superstar at the Capitol, Sydney. Photograph: Greg Desmond

changes therein, will immediately understand why.

The control technology now available is well capable of keeping up with the demands of the designers, and lighting development is now being taken to the development of lanterns capable of better performance and greater ease of adjustment.

Finally Audio. This is the most recent technology to concern theatre people because until not long ago it was a source of pride for performers that they could make themselves heard clearly in the largest auditorium. The advent of electronic amplified instruments, larger stages and larger auditoriums, made this a more difficult achievement — ally this with the fact that a number of performers must now live by both theatre and television, with the consequent necessity of developing microphone technique, and it can be seen how multiple microphones become established in the theatre as well. The best example to be seen in Australia is perhaps *Jesus Christ Superstar*. The requirement for that famed part of the production costs, and scored with the show, but we will probably see the introduction of multi channel mics and associated equipment as part of permanent theatre installations before long. As well as reinforcement and variation of voice and music arising from the performance, theatre audio installations must also be able to provide incidental sound effects and music when required, often at high levels and from many locations around the stage and auditorium. The topic is relatively young, interesting, and should be covered in more detail on another occasion. Again, television has installed some of the highest quality sound equipment being brought to the theatre as, for example, with *Star! and White Mice*, which was in fact a television production transferred to live theatre using a mixture of recording and live sound, blended to the extent whereby few members of the audience could pick the transition.

In general, it can be said that despite the increasing capital cost of technical equipment, major theatres will continue to use the latest technology for control of mediators, lighting and sound in response to pressures from artists, directors, actors and others for increased facilities and to the increasing cost of manpower. This is by no means to dispute the viewpoint of the alternative theatre previously mentioned, who must always have a need for simple manual devices of the utmost flexibility for class rooms, studios and experimental work, and for the wide-spread areas of theatre where as practitioners are developing from part time to fulltime, and from simple to complex productions.

One of the problems facing those responsible for decisions on technical availability is that the better the quality of the installation, the better and therefore less obvious the results. Hence it is sometimes difficult to persuade hard pressed management that there is indeed a real return on the money expended. The recent formation of the Association of Theatre Technology in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales is important as it will enable the exchange of ideas and experience between practitioners and give the technicians as a whole a stronger voice to management and to movement to produce better results for everyone.

T-A announces a Technical Answer Section. Send your Questions to:
Dennis Irving,
C/O Theatre Publications Ltd—
7 President Place,
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2305

Opera

David Gyger interviews

JOHN COPLEY—PERENNIAL PRODUCER



John Copley. Photograph A Q

"Something they don't quite understand about opera directors is that you change your casts so many times. ... it doesn't really happen in the straight theatre," says John Copley. He is munching a chicken leg between phrases, having a light lunch in the open terrace north of the Sydney Opera House surrounded by the busy harbour and a team of reporters from *Theatre Australia*. Overhead the gulls scream and circle in the bright sun, the passing boats occasionally fool at each other in friendly greeting.

"You suddenly have a new *Susanmah* who is totally different temperamentally to the one you had before and the effects everybody else might be different physically, she's certainly quite different vocally."

It is a lovely place to relax in the middle of a hectic day of rehearsal, quite a change from Covent Garden, London, where Copley is resident director. But he is no stranger to Australia or the Australian Opera, where each year since 1970, he has worked with the local company.

"There's a certain line that you follow because that's what you think *Susanmah* is about, but the way that particular person does it, the whole thing is completely changed." Copley is talking about the character of *Susanmah* in Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* because that's the opera that is closest to the surface of his mind. He is re-producing it for a few Sydney performances, the first of them under Richard Burynges, beginning in a few

days time. Most of the cast is the same this year as it was in his 1977 original.

Actually, he sees "this cast is emerging because in five years they have actually developed. They're able to do more as much. I don't mean in business, busy business, but in emotional terms." Which is expanding the original concept of his production. "If you kept it the same it would be awful," he says.

But inevitably there is a problem when you change casts frequently. It is not so bad if you can break in the new singer yourself, but what if you can't? Copley comes close for a moment before he answers. "Ah well," he says, "that's one of the big problems in opera today. Finding talented residents or talented young directors who can do that. This probably sounds egotistical, but I was one of those."

People like Griffiths and Vickers were very happy to leave me in charge of a production because I was actually at sounds and I felt that enough to know how to deal with it. The Gods going into it when Gershwins there had done it before. The other thing is that the minute that any of us are that good at it we want to do our own work. I don't do anything who is professional now. But he compliments those who have rehearsed it in figures locally during these five years. "We had very loyal people who've tried to keep it the same. It's quite good now."

In times of spiralling costs, this is a major problem for opera managements — keeping existing productions in good shape over a decade or so, to which time they'll be physically worn out and fashions can be expected to have changed anyhow. And it is a problem that particularly affects the local work of John Copley, who has directed a new production for the A Q each year since 1970. Though not all of them have met with unanimous critical acclaim, all are still in the repertoire. The list is impressive: 1970 *Fidelio*; 1971 *Figaro*; 1972 *Agrippa*; 1973 *The Magic Flute*; 1974 *Jencks*; 1975 *Amadeus* or *Amadeus*; 1976 *Cost for Love*; 1977 *Mozart's Bastard*. ... Copley is full of praise for the development of the A Q over the six years he has known it, when he first came to Australia it "had lots of energy and whatever, but ... they've done some terrific pieces."

He interrupts himself, suddenly re-focusing on the night of 1974 when Robert Conwell brought the house down with a stunning premiere performance as the Countess in *Jencks*. "I don't know if Edward Davies was conducting. Copley sitting nervously next to me in the audience waiting to see what would happen."



Lore Kappel Weather (Jencks) in the Australian Opera's production of Jencks's *Jencks*. Photograph A Q

Books

PRODUCTION HANDBOOK & CURRENCY DOUBLEBILL

Helen van der Poorten

The Complete Play Production Handbook.
Carl Allenworth, ed. Fern Butler.
Ratton Hale and Company, London 1976.
Recommended retail price \$19.20.
Currency Double Bill, A Lesson in English.
Barry Oakley, and
The Christian Brothers, Ron Blair, Currency
Midway Drama Ltd, Sydney 1976.
Recommended retail price \$1.95

One looks with interest to a book which purports to be 'a full library on play production', but alas, *The Complete Play Production Handbook* falls short while it tries to achieve too much. We are informed that schoolteachers will find the book very useful, and indeed it introduces the novice to the notion of directing, locations, technique, and to possible means of auditioning. It also covers basic stage lighting (sound equipment) design and makeup, as well as summarising as management procedures its most useful features in a glossary of stage terms so that you can use up your backstage colloquies with theatrical jargon.

Unfortunately the alternative approach of the book betrays its main fault — that of making the simple sound complicated. One reads the book with the novice's words in mind, and some matters are made far too difficult at an early stage. The elaborate process of turning an old piece of bread into simulated chicken (so to speak an image) in the props chapter is undertaken before we understand the need for simulation at all, and to me as an Australian (the suggestion of using root beer on stage instead of the real thing is outrageous).

The directing section contains fascinating information about different kinds of move. One pretends, with decency, to the well-informed amateur learning by heart the various situations in which to use the 'direct cross' and the 'curved-cross'. Here as elsewhere the gesture is made to seem more important than the move.

Having said all this, I wish to comment that the section on stage lighting is direct and relevant. It may be that as a questionnaire more experienced theatrical personnel able to take the advice with a grain of salt, this will be a useful book. It contains, as an appendix, a list of contacts and national cities for the English theatre scene.

Currency-Midway are venturing into different territory with the first of their new 'Double-Bill' series, where short plays with thematic links are published, one each end, in an easy reading edition. I am fearful that this idea carries with it the danger that less accomplished plays will be linked with distinguished ones for the sake of the theme and that readers may ultimately be irritated by not getting two excellent plays in one volume in this first double bill; however, we have played by two well known dramatists, Ron Blair and Barry Oakley.

Peter Carroll remarks in his comments on Blair's *The Christian Brothers*, that the play is 'actor-proof' and it is difficult to prove this

that Currency has chosen to publish such a well known tour de force along with Barry Oakley's more conventional exploration of classroom dynamics. Certainly if one can enter temporarily from the memory Carroll's own performance of the brother, the play reads very well as a written text, with perhaps some problems of timing arising from the printed monologue form. Of course the play is only technically a monologue, as the audience-class, the invisible pupil, and the agonistic maths teacher (not door are still presences. Strangely enough, underlines with the general and plural 'us', the *Christian Brothers*, Ron Blair allows us an intimate and personal glimpse of the lonely brother.

In contrast, the more specifically titled *A Lesson in English* reveals a brilliant and often unassuming schoolteacher, Barry Oakley makes it clear to us in his comments after the play that he sees the teacher as a scapegoat and although he denounces this when school inspection and the boy turn upon his teacher, Oakley makes his unattractive as he makes his attempts at 'top' language with the jargon of literary academic. The internal lesson, the overt enjoyment of corporal punishment, and the teacher's sexual motivations are not handled with subtlety. Of course Oakley's character is dominated with an outward and visible class present, so we are automatically distanced from him. Blair's brother is shown in isolation, and the privacy of his wound is shared by us as we become his class.

The social battles of Barry Oakley's classroom are matched by the specifically Catholic ritual of Ron Blair's *R. D. Carman* shows some additional insights into 1950's Catholic schooling in this edition and the variety of crucial material from an actor, a playwright, a poet and the critics will provide useful study material for anyone presenting these plays.



THE COMPLETE PLAY PRODUCTION HANDBOOK

Carl Allenworth

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Francis Reid, editor of *THEATRE* since 1974, author of *THE STAGE LIGHTING HANDBOOK*, and an acknowledged master of lighting design will be in Sydney from the 18th to the 22nd of October and will conduct a series of courses for students at the Pacific Theatre, Kensington.

3 DAY BASIC COURSE 18th — 22nd October 1976 9.30 — 4.30 daily

Two public lectures will be held on the 18th and 21st of October — the 18th will be directed towards amateurs — the 21st towards practising artists. Both lectures will be at 8.00 p.m.

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INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

Currency Press	47	R. Shore Ballet	56
Falkings	47	Old Tote	5
H.V.T.C.	26	Pathway Artists Book	
Muse Hall	26	S.A.T.C.	10
NIBB	F56	Shore	26
National Theatre	13	Shore Business Bookshop	23
Norwood	31	Stoked	P1
		T. H. King	